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02.06.2015

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Thinks
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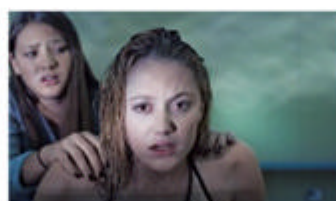
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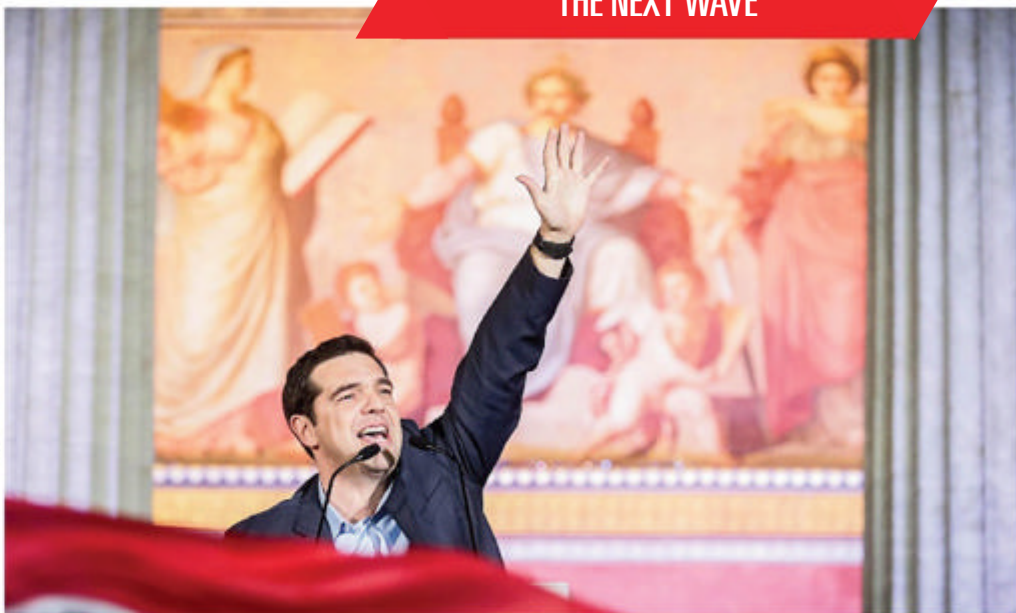
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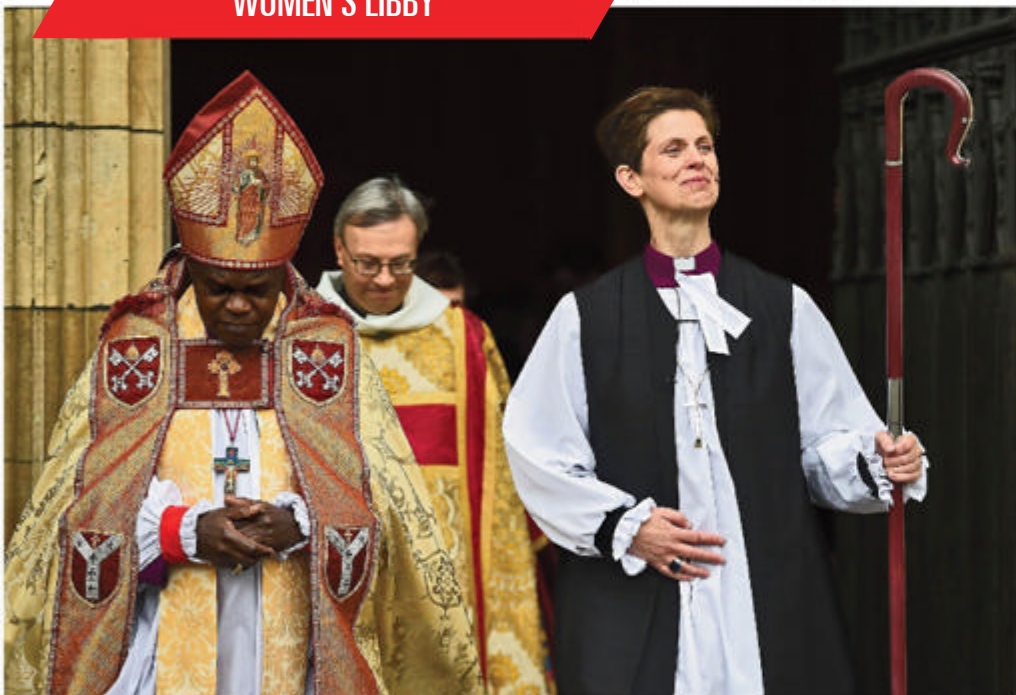
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THE NEXT WAVE



WOMEN'S LIBBY



UNDER THE BANNER





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WHAT SILICON VALLEY THINKS OF WOMEN

THE SEXISM IN SILICON VALLEY IS SORDID AND SYSTEMIC. IT'S GOING TO TAKE A REVOLUTION TO BRING IT DOWN—OR A WOMAN'S TOUCH.

On a spring afternoon last year at an outdoor café in San Francisco, two denizens of the tech community sketched out their strategy for a startup. Like most 28-year-olds in Silicon Valley, they had smarts and dreams. One was a passionate, fast-talking New Yorker, the other a shy computer whiz from Syracuse, New York, and together they formed the

classic hacker-hustler team behind many of the valley's Next Big Things.

They had been emailing each other about the idea for months, with growing conviction of its awesome potential. It addressed a well-known problem, one that afflicts the tech industry but also banking, media, advertising and film. Corporations needed it. Individuals would love it. It might even be disruptive, as they say. That afternoon, over lunch in the California sun, they committed to an ambitious business plan. That summer, they would keep their day jobs at media and advertising companies, but devote many off-hours and weekends to the startup. The savvy talker, who had worked in communications at Citigroup and Thomson Reuters, joined professional clubs, sought out older advisers, arranged meetings and worked at creating buzz that just might pique investors.

The programmer toiled at the computer, coaxing an algorithm, often alone.

Four months later, the hustler won the project's first investor, a woman who works at one the world's biggest hedge funds. It was a small sum, but the entrepreneurs quit their jobs the next day, setting up camp in a donated corner of another startup's loft office above San Francisco's Union Square. The new digs mercifully provided free food.

In the ensuing months, the pair eschewed new clothes, walked instead of Ubered and assembled a small, mostly unpaid staff. They found pro bono lawyers with startup expertise, signed contracts, designed and revised their PowerPoint pitch a dozen times and met with more than 50 potential investors. The programmer tested the algorithm. They had 1,500 clients wait-listed for a beta launch. They attracted interest at five large technology companies, including Twitter. They told investors their project was the next Pinterest—the way screenwriters tell movie moguls their scripts are the next Titanic.

Nine months after that day at the café, they launched their startup last month.

In a community like Silicon Valley, where six- and seven-figure investments are routinely tossed at ideas that sometimes succeed but more often flash-bang and fizzle out like meteors, they were getting only paltry sums—about \$400,000 shy of the \$525,000 they were hoping for in “pre-seed,” early investment money.

There is, though, one thing these two founders are missing, and it is almost the sine qua non of the fabled Silicon Valley startup. They don’t have penises.



Dana Settle, 27, the youngest partner at the Mayfield Fund, one of the oldest venture capital funds in Silicon Valley, sits in a meeting to decide which new companies to fund with the more than \$2.5 billion dollars they manage, Nov. 20, 2000. Credit: Bob Sacha/Corbis

Gang-Bang Interviews

The legendary names of Silicon Valley are well known, and for the most part, the men behind the names look like this: geeky, in jeans and T-shirt, maybe with a hoodie, maybe shaving, maybe a college dropout, coding since early pubescence in the upper-middle-class parental basement.

They walk into a venture capital firm on Sand Hill Road in Menlo Park or in San Francisco's SoMa district, and they walk out with a million dollars. A few years later, if all goes well, an IPO makes a lot of people richer.

Computer programmer Lauren Mosenthal and her partner, Eileen Carey, came to California attracted by that kind of possibility. The only problem with their dream is that Silicon Valley has never produced a female Gates, Zuckerberg or Kalanick. There are a few high-profile female entrepreneurs in the Bay Area, but despite the very visible success of corporate titans Meg Whitman, Sheryl Sandberg and Marissa Mayer, who signed up with companies after they took off—their numbers are relatively minuscule.

Despite that discouraging fact, the two women spent their 20s deep inside the valley's bro community—a culture that has been described as savagely misogynistic. In inverse ratio to the forward-looking technology the community produces, it is stunningly backward when it comes to gender relations. Google “Silicon Valley” and “frat boy culture” and you'll find dozens of pages of articles and links to mainstream news articles, blogs, screeds, letters, videos and tweets about threats of violence, sexist jokes and casual misogyny, plus reports of gender-based hiring and firing, major-league sexual harassment lawsuits and a financing system that rewards young men and shortchanges women.

There was the young executive of a company valued at \$250 million who got up in front of an audience at a conference billed as diverse and joked about “gang-bang interviews” and how he got his start by sending elusive CEOs whose attention he needed “bikini shots” from a “nudie calendar” he'd made of college women. It's the sort of place where one of the valley's “most-eligible bachelors,” Gurbaksh Chahal—an entrepreneur with companies valued at hundreds of millions of dollars—is shown on a home security video beating his girlfriend for half an hour. (He received no jail time, pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor and

received 25 hours of community service and three years' probation.) It's a community in which the porn-inspired, "drading" college tweets of Evan Spiegel, the CEO of Snapchat, go public; where a CEO's history of domestic violence has no repercussions but female executives get fired for tweeting about sexist jokes they overhear. It's a place where companies routinely staff conference booths with scantily clad "code-babes" and where women are so routinely sexually harassed at conferences that codes of conduct have become de rigueur—and the subject of endless misogynistic jokes on Twitter.

It is still the kind of place where investors can tweak women who ask them for financing with barbs like "I don't like the way women think. They haven't mastered linear thinking." This was how one investor turned down Kathryn Tucker's pitch for RedRover, an app that helps parents find kid-friendly things to do, which has since launched in New York, San Francisco and Atlanta.

Three high-profile sexual harassment lawsuits were filed in 2014 against Tinder, the virtual town square of hookup culture, and two of the biggest venture capital firms—Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers and CMEA Capital. The complaints include a senior CMEA partner harassing a series of executive assistants like a character in *Mad Men*, replete with sexual nicknames, trapping them in his office and frequently referring to porn and pubic hair. At Kleiner Perkins, former partner Ellen Pao says partners countenanced harassment and retaliation from a fellow partner, and excluded women from client dinner parties because they "kill the buzz." At Tinder, a male co-founder (and ex-boyfriend) sent abusive texts and yanked co-founder Whitney Wolfe's title because, she alleged, he told her having a woman on a board "makes the company seem like a joke." Tinder and CMEA settled under confidential terms within months. That CMEA partner is no longer with the firm, and Tinder temporarily suspended the executive

involved. The suit filed by Ellen Pao—who is now at Reddit—is headed to trial this spring. Kleiner Perkins has denied the allegations and stated that Pao “twisted facts and events in an attempt to create legal claims where none exist.”

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that a front line, if not the trench of the global gender war, is in Silicon Valley. In that sense, Silicon Valley culture echoes the Wolf of Wall Street culture in the '80s and '90s. But while Wall Street today seems tamer—thanks to lawsuits and diversity consultants in every corner—in Silicon Valley the misogyny continues unabated. A combination of that very traditional Wall Street wolf-ism among Northern California's venture capital boys' club and the socially stunted boy-men that the money men like to finance has created a particularly toxic atmosphere for women in Silicon Valley.

This matters for tens of thousands of reasons, but on the broadest level, since digital technology is our era's Industrial Revolution, fortunes being made now and business models and corporate cultures forming today will be with us for a century to come—and women are for the most part sidelined. Zuckerberg, Gates, Thiel, Musk—these are our Carnegies and Morgans and Rockefellers, whose names will be on museum wings and university halls 100 years from now. And there's not a female among them.

Venture capitalists often blame the dearth of women graduating in computing and math and engineering, but that is only part of it. As Jodi Kantor [wrote in a New York Times article](#) tracing the fates of the Stanford class of 1994, many women with such degrees simply bailed out, while their male counterparts went on to make fortunes as the Internet exploded.

A recent report on women entrepreneurs by the Kauffman Foundation identified the chief challenges to female entrepreneurship. Researchers interviewed 350 female entrepreneurs, and most cited “lack of available advisers” at the top of their list. Female professional

attrition is only one reason for the scarcity of mentors for younger women. Another is that women who stay in the game beyond their late 30s may be less subject to sexual harassment than their younger counterparts, but they are sidelined by virulent ageism in the industry that especially—but not solely—afflicts women.

Younger women, setting out on careers in tech, are furious. One group wrote a scathing “Open Letter to Tech” last year complaining about regular “rape-y emails” and professional exclusion.

Shanley Kane is a young tech industry observer and founder of Model View Culture, an acid-penned, widely read website on which she routinely exposes and excoriates the white brogrammer establishment. In an interview with MIT Technology Review in December, she said venture capitalists talk about the need to get 10-year-old girls into science in order to bring up the numbers of women they will fund, but don’t fund the ones already in the industry. “We are not getting hired, and we are not getting promoted, and we are being systematically driven out of the industry,” she said.

Asked what women should do, Kane wasn’t encouraging: “I don’t have a lot of advice. There’s not a whole lot you can do to keep your career from being crushed by misogyny.”



From left, Lauren Mosenthal and Eileen Carey are co-founders of Glassbreakers. Credit: Ashley Jones

Kicking Glass

Every successful startup pitch begins with a problem, followed by a solution and an estimation of how many people will pay for it. Carey and Mosenthal are well versed in the problems women in tech face, and that's how they came up with the idea for their startup, which they called Glassbreakers.

Glassbreakers is a peer-mentoring platform for companies that want to retain and promote women, and it's also for individuals because it matches women in the same profession with other women at relatively similar levels so they can share tips, contacts and skills. Based on a "software as a service" business model, it relies on an algorithm Mosenthal continues to refine to produce a product that's a bit like a dating site, matching people by location, career goals, background and needed skills. "Glassbreakers is a \$100 million-a-year opportunity for investors, given how many organizations lack the resources to build mentorship programs but are seeking a solution," Carey says.

But there is “added value,” as she puts it in her pitch to investors: community-building for working women. “A more connected female workforce is a stronger one,” she says.



Founders Jaclyn Baumgarten, left, and Ari Horie discuss a project during a meeting with entrepreneurs at the Women's Startup Lab in Menlo Park, Calif., May 27, 2014. Credit: Patrick Tehan/Bay Area News Group/MCT/Sipa USA

That’s an added value close to Carey’s heart. She hails from a family of East Coast feminists, and her aunt, Noreen Connell, was a member of the New York Radical Feminists, a National Organization for Women leader and Bella Abzug comrade-in-arms who co-wrote a 1974 sourcebook for rape victims. Carey is named after her mother: “I’m Eileen Junior.” She admits she has only rarely experienced sexual harassment or even sexist behavior. “Women our age expect feminism,” she says, sitting in a sunny, donated corner room in the loft offices of Prism Skylabs, a retail analytics company. “We expect to be treated equally. That shit would never fly around me.”

But she knows bias and harassment are endemic in her profession. When she hears such stories, she encourages the women to report the men, but she understands why they

don't. She has no such qualms herself. "I have seen people sexually harass people, and I have reported it to HR or their bosses," she says.

Glassbreakers's peer-mentorship model is different from the traditional mentorship model, Carey says. It aims to mitigate the effect of female professional attrition on younger generations of women coming up. "Traditional mentorship, established in male-dominated industry, is between very senior and very junior people. But the problem for women in the workforce is that there are many more mentees than mentors. Also, the tech industry is changing so fast that women even five or 10 years older may have very little of practical use to share with younger workers."

Around 1,500 women signed up for last month's launch, which was confined to the Bay Area. Customers who sign up provide information about their skills and professional goals, and thanks to Mosenthal's algorithm, they will find three names in their inbox and the user decides whether to make the connection. The two plan to eventually tailor Glassbreakers platforms for women in other industries.

After their first investment, the women raised \$100,000, including their combined personal life savings of \$15,000 each. Carey says she met with around 50 potential investors, and if the launch goes well, and she can show both significant interest and that the product works without glitches, this month she will be heading out on her first "seed round"—startup lingo for pitch meetings with venture capitalists aimed at raising enough money—she wants \$1.5 million—to keep going for 18 months.

The road to launch wasn't easy. Investors did not pony up the pre-seed financing goal. The company made it to the interview stage of the coveted Y-Combinator tech incubator but no further. Carey says those setbacks were balanced out by promising signs, including the ardent support of older influential women, like the woman who ponied up their first investment.

She also picked up some male investment interest, including funding from Ben Parr, founder of the DominateFund and formerly of Mashable, who invested \$20,000 in Glassbreakers just before the launch. "I've been talking to women about this problem for years," Parr says. "A lot of men would write this off. If they build the community, the possibilities and opportunities are enormous—especially for Glassbreakers within workplaces."



Conference attendees at TechCrunch Disrupt at Pier 48, Sept. 8, 2014 in San Francisco. Credit: Steve Jennings/Getty

Asking for It

"We are confident women!" It's a mantra Carey repeats, half-earnestly, half-smiling, as she prepares for a pitch meeting. CEO Carey does those alone; Chief Technology Officer Mosenthal will come only when and if the investors want to talk technology. Carey says that having two of them in the room when she's asking for money "breaks the energy."

But asking for money didn't come naturally—and that's part of the problem for women in tech. It's not all sexism

but also a culture in which women don't easily brag or bring the same swagger to fund-raising pitches that the boys do. She and Mosenthal bootstrapped (startup talk for self-financing) for months. Even after she had her rap down for the pitch, she had to be coaxed across the line. In August, she met at a Starbucks with a woman affiliated with a major hedge fund. Over the course of an hour, Carey explained the Glassbreakers platform. The woman, who invested her own money and prefers to remain anonymous (she doesn't want her company involved), clearly "got" the problem. At some point in their conversation, the woman gently advised Carey that it was important to come out and ask for money.

"At the end of the meeting, she asked straight out, 'Are you going to ask me to invest in your company?'" Carey says. "And I said yes."

That investor ponied up less than \$10,000 but says she likes Glassbreakers as a business prospect because of various corporate initiatives, such as Intel's recently announced \$300 million, five-year commitment to women's leadership and diversity. "That's a trend that will be very favorable for a technology like Glassbreakers," the investor says.

The effect of that investment on Carey and Mosenthal was exponentially greater than the relatively small dollar figure. "Next day," Carey says, "we quit our jobs."

Carey's unease about asking for money doesn't surprise Vivek Wadhwa, a Silicon Valley investor, diversity coach and author of *Innovating Women*. Wadhwa says shaky self-confidence is one of the chief things holding women back. It's not just about the money, though. Wadhwa says women not only are reluctant to overstate their accomplishments and goals; they habitually understate them. "Often I have to say to them, Why are you underselling?" he says. "When I coach women, I tell them how wonderful they are. Women won't make the ridiculous projections about their companies that the guys will. They won't say the really stupid thing

the nerds do. They are a lot more realistic and practical and humble.”



Stanford engineering graduate student Serena Yeung, second from left, meets up with other male engineering students Arturo Escarp, left, Subodh Iyengar, right, and Rathul Sheth, second from right, on the Stanford University campus in Stanford, Calif., May 30, 2012. Credit: Paul Sakuma/AP

Gender-gating

No amount of confidence changes the fact that the valley’s big venture capitalists are almost entirely male. The top five don’t have any female senior partners, and **VC partners are 96 percent male**. Twenty years ago, the partners were 97 percent male.

A new generation of millennials starting their firms have hardly changed the system. Some of the wealthiest men in the New Billionaires club are Peter Thiel (who financed Zuckerberg) and David Sacks—two guys who spent their formative years at Stanford in the 1990s writing anti-feminist screeds for their school paper. According to Kantor in The New York Times, “In the pages of [Stanford’s] The Review, they defined feminism in negative terms—alarmist, accusatory toward men, blind to inherent biological differences. Feminists ‘see phallocentrism in everything

longer than it is wide,' Mr. Sacks wrote. 'If you're male and heterosexual at Stanford, you have sex and then you get screwed.'"

Speaking to the Times, Sacks regretted his collegiate anti-gay screeds, but didn't seem too concerned about the juvenilia directed at women, nor the status of his female co-eds, the majority of whom dropped out of the business.

VCs are not funding women. According to a study by Babson College, only 2.7 percent of the 6,517 companies that received venture funding from 2011 to 2013 had women CEOs. Meanwhile, the Kauffman report found that female-run startups produce a 31 percent higher return on investment than startups run by men.

One problem with the male-dominated system is that top partners have almost never been exposed to women as professional peers. Their interaction with women is limited to their wives and daughters, and maybe executive assistants.

Male VCs who don't have female professional peers are especially difficult to pitch on products that serve a female market. "Dozens of times, women have come and told me, I pitched to a firm and what do I hear over and over, 'Oh, I will go home and ask my wife about it,'" says Trish Costello, an entrepreneur and founder of Portfolia, a venture capital investment platform designed for women. She is also CEO emeritus and co-founder of the Palo Alto-based Kauffman Fellows, a global training institute for venture capitalists.

A prominent venture capital investor from one of California's top firms, who asked not to be identified because he didn't want his firm "singled out," called the absence of female partners "embarrassing" but said it's directly related to the smaller percentages of women graduating from the engineering schools. "There is no question that diversity of opinion adds to the acumen of the group," he said. "One of the most passionate business reasons we have to expand the investment to include a

handful of women is that they are often not represented in the partnership dynamic around the table on Monday when we are discussing investment ideas.”

But the investor insisted that potential, not gender, was the key to which ideas, of the 10,000 that get pitched to his firm annually, end up being among the 12 that get financed. He added that of those pitches, 20 percent come from female entrepreneurs—which he said tracks with the percentage of women in engineering programs. The investor sits on the boards of two women-run firms that his company financed, and both female CEOs find the focus on their gender “patronizing.”

This is such a touchy subject for the all-male partnerships that few investors want to discuss it—on the record or not. A spokeswoman at Andreessen Horowitz declined to comment, and Peter Thiel’s firm, the Founders Fund, did not respond to messages.

To be fair, there are many reasons Glassbreakers might not appeal to a Founders Fund or Andreessen Horowitz, or any of the dozens of other all-male VC partnerships on Sand Hill Road in Menlo Park, reasons that have nothing to do with sexist bias. It’s not likely to be a Facebook, or even a Houzz, the home-remodeling site launched by an Israeli husband and wife, financed by Sequoia and now valued at \$2.3 billion. Glassbreakers is by definition “gender-gated,” thereby excluding 50 percent of potential users. It also presumes that many women do feel the need for female mentorship, when in fact there is quite possibly a significant cohort of working women who think they are getting along just fine without another woman’s advice.

That said, if the Glassbreakers launch shows a market for the product, it will almost certainly have a longer life than Red Swoosh, a now-forgotten Travis Kalanick file-sharing enterprise that venture capitalists threw millions at, and which, when it sold for \$19 million, enabled the young founder to buy a San Francisco mansion and Uber.

Should the Glassbreakers team fail in the next 18 months, odds are much worse for them than for men that they will not get more funding. Wadhwa often talks about the importance of “pattern recognition” among VCs. The male bankers simply have an idea of what a successful startup founder looks like, and young women like Carey and Mosenthal simply don’t fit.

“Women don’t look like winners. So they can’t fail, while boys in the club can,” Wadhwa says.

To avoid this, Carey has vetted the venture capitalist firms she will approach, seeking those that have funded other female startups, and making sure that they have some women in senior, decision-making roles. “Of the VCs we have had the highest engagement with, three are women-led firms,” Carey says.

The financing gap between male and female entrepreneurs is massive. VCs typically fund women at the lowest levels—\$100,000. The Kauffman study found the majority (nearly 80 percent) of female entrepreneurs didn’t get venture capital but used personal savings as their top funding source. Carey found a network of women, some of whom are or have been venture capitalists or who have started companies. Among their bits of wisdom was one that is antithetical to the swaggering male startup CEO who is sure he’s going to be the Next Zuck. “Talking to these women, we learned you have to ask,” Carey says. “Don’t pretend you know something. If you are honest about what you don’t know, people are more responsive.”

But the advice that bothers her most, Carey says, has to do with how to deal with her own gender. “We are very fortunate and haven’t faced discrimination in our lives,” Carey said of herself and Mosenthal. “I’ve never been told I would not be able to do something or that it would be harder to do because I was a woman. So it’s been strange going through this experience and being told that because we are women it will be harder for us to fund-raise. The hardest part

has been hearing that and digesting it and accepting that our gender would be a barrier for entry. I never thought it would be this real.”



Sheryl Sandberg visits the Facebook France offices, April 14, 2014.

Credit: Elodie Gregoire/REA/Redux

“This Really Happened”

Heading out on her first financing round, Carey is well aware of the worst things that can happen to a young woman seeking money for a startup. The stories are rampant—in fact, every woman entrepreneur who’s been around Silicon Valley has one. For brevity’s sake, we present one from entrepreneur and venture capitalist Heidi Roizen.

Early in her career, Roizen was working “on a company-defining deal”—involving, potentially, millions of dollars—with a major PC manufacturer. “The PC manufacturer’s senior vice president who had been instrumental in crafting the deal suggested he and I sign over dinner in San Francisco to celebrate,” Roizen has written. “When I arrived at the restaurant, I found it a bit awkward to be seated at a table for four yet to be in two seats right next to each other, but it was a French restaurant and that seemed to be the style, so

down I sat. Wine was brought and toasts were made to our great future together. About halfway through the dinner, he told me he had also brought me a present, but it was under the table, and would I please give him my hand so he could give it to me. I gave him my hand, and he placed it in his unzipped pants.

“Yes,” she said. “This really happened.”

Every Silicon Valley entrepreneur who spoke with Newsweek has a story somewhat like this—varying only in degree of brazenness. One young woman had worked for a year on a startup with an older male financial mentor. When she was ready to head out for a round of funding, he took her to dinner—a meeting at which she expected to be introduced to VCs or told which ones he’d arranged for her to meet with. Instead, over wine, he confessed that he was having a midlife crisis and that he was in love with her. No finances would be forthcoming.

Roizen stayed in the business and is now one of the industry’s legendary female entrepreneurs. Wadhwa says women must approach male VCs with caution and awareness: “Women don’t get it. The young women don’t seem to understand the reason why they get their calls returned so easily and get small amounts of funding is they are dealing with hungry men. These are disgusting perverts. Some of them used to be my friends—sexist jerks. And I know how they speak behind the scenes.”

To head this off, Carey recently dyed her blond hair mousy brown and dresses down, not up. Now she meets with investors only after researching them or getting references from other women. “We are vetting them left, right and center. We don’t take meetings over drinks. I do know a guy who raised a million dollars and got blackout drunk every night with the VC. That’s not how we work.”

Carey says the slightest sexist overtures dent her confidence. “When an investor kisses me on the cheek on the way out, I feel like shit for weeks afterward.”



Google employees eat lunch in a cafeteria adorned by artwork created by Google employees, in Mountain View, Calif. Jan. 6, 2006. Credit: Eros Hoagland/Redux

Viagra but No Abortions

The Glassbreakers women are launching a product for women, designed to solve a problem women understand better than men, in an economic sector that has traditionally produced products shaped by the minds of young men for young men. It's inarguable that white, upper-middle-class young men have applied the new technologies to make things that reflect their desires and culture and foisted them on the world. Women who complain about sexist video games get death threats from legions of boyfans conditioned by formative years on the Xbox controller to believe it's their right to rescue—or maybe assault—wasp-waisted half-naked damsels in distress. And the anonymity of the Internet has proved relatively more menacing to women.

None of these ill effects are deliberate, but they are built into designs and products created almost solely by one gender. As recently as 2011, for example, Apple made a Siri who could find prostitutes and Viagra but not abortion providers.

Reviewing the movie *The Social Network*, the writer Zadie Smith wrote that everything about Facebook is “reduced to the size of its founder. Poking, because that’s what shy boys do to girls they are scared to talk to.” Ultimately, she wrote, *The Social Network* wasn’t “a cruel portrait of any particular real-world person called ‘Mark Zuckerberg.’ It’s a cruel portrait of us: 500 million sentient people entrapped in the recent careless thoughts of a Harvard sophomore.”

Frustrated, women in Silicon Valley seem to be segregating themselves in women-only venture funds or starting gender-gated funds.

Costello says that the sexual harassment lawsuits and the public talk about endless ugly events is a sign that things are changing. “We are in a major time of shift. There is no other time when women have been better educated, earning a majority of undergraduate and graduate degrees and serving in equal numbers in nearly all professions. The control of personal wealth is about equal, as baby boomer men are dying earlier and women are inheriting money from their parents and husbands and have their own assets from working. If we can access 2 percent of that money controlled by women, we don’t need to be begging on Sand Hill Road.”



Alik Keplicz/AP

POLAND'S JEWISH CULTURE RISES FROM THE ASHES OF PERSECUTION

AS ANTI-SEMITISM REARS ITS UGLY HEAD IN WESTERN EUROPE, JEWISH POLAND RISES.

Paweł Bramson grew up in a white, Catholic country, and he liked it that way. As a teenager in Warsaw, he despised the rare Arab and African immigrants who were starting to settle in Poland in the 1990s. He and his friends,

their heads shaved to the skin, used to chase them around, sometimes beating them up. Once, they threw burning objects through the windows of a dormitory to scare the Arab students living there. He also knew that he and his pals despised Jews, even though he'd never encountered one.

“There were no Jews,” he says. “Nobody ever saw them.”

That's because for past few decades, Poland has been an ethnically and religiously homogeneous country—according to the 2011 census, 97.7 percent of the population is ethnically Polish. But it hasn't always been that way. Hundreds of thousands of Jews lived in Warsaw before World War II, and nearly 3 million lived in Poland—the largest such population in Europe. Bleak estimates suggest fewer than 50,000 **survived the Holocaust**.

The Communist regime that came to power under Soviet leadership after World War II was intolerant of religion and campaigned against the new Israeli state. The underground opposition movement against the Communist government, called Solidarity, wasn't much better: It did not allow Jews to have leadership roles because it feared a backlash. By 1969, almost all of Poland's Jews had either fled or assimilated. Even after the fall of Communism, the word Jewish carried a stigma: During Poland's first-ever presidential campaign in 1990, a front-runner candidate was **falsely accused of hiding Jewish roots**, and lost.



Polish skinheads shout anti-German slogans during a demonstration outside the German Embassy in April 1992 protesting against what they called German and Jewish occupation of Poland. Credit: Alik Keplicz/AP

Around that time, Bramson, then 18, married his high school sweetheart, Ola. Like 90 percent of Poles, both Ola and Bramson were Catholic. Or so they thought.

In 1996, Ola came home from a genealogy archive with a pile of documents. She'd gone to learn about her ancestry, but she'd also done some research about her husband's. Among the documents was a copy of the Bramson family tree, which went back to 1835. Pawel's grandparents had lived in the southeast of Poland, near Ukraine, and according to the documents, they were Jewish.

Bramson, then 21, didn't believe it. He took the papers to his parents, thinking they would assure him these weren't any grandparents of his. But they only confirmed his fears. Though both were raised Jewish, Bramson's parents hid their identity because they feared anti-Semitism. "I was angry. I was outraged. I was also disappointed," he says, through a translator. He says his memory of that time is

foggy because he bought some vodka and drank for an entire week.

He might have ignored the discovery, but, remarkably, Ola found Jewish roots in her family tree, too. She went through similar shock and confusion, and emerged with the desire to learn more about the religion she had come from. And she wanted Paweł to join her. They talked, he sobered up, and they talked some more. For six months, he did nothing.

Then they went to the synagogue.

A Pole First

Outside of Europe, Jews still sometimes call Poland the Old Country, a place where villages were once built around synagogues, and where you could find a Yiddish newspaper and a kosher butcher on nearly every corner. Memories of the Old Country, however, are tightly entwined with the trauma of the Holocaust. Treblinka, where nearly a million Jews died during World War II, is less than an hour from Warsaw. Auschwitz is an hour from Krakow. Dozens of tourism companies will take you to the death camps—but you'd be hard-pressed to find a tour of living, thriving Jewish Poland.



A group of Polish Jews are led away for deportation by German SS soldiers, in April/May 1943, during the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto by German troops after an uprising in the Jewish quarter. Credit: AP

Slowly, that's changing. Poland's first Jewish Community Center **opened** in Krakow in 2008. Another such center, this time in Warsaw, was inaugurated in 2013. A year later, the opening of the starkly elegant Museum of the History of Polish Jews made **international headlines**. By focusing on Jewish culture and social history, rather than just World War II, the museum emphasizes that there's more to Jewish life in Poland than the Holocaust.

Severyn Ashkenazy, who was born in Poland in 1936, survived the Holocaust and founded the Friends of Jewish Renewal in Poland, recently **argued** that his country might be the safest place for Jews in contemporary Europe. It's a plausible claim, given the recent displays of anti-Semitic violence in France, which is home to the world's third-largest Jewish population. At the same time, several **recent polls** suggest that at least half of all Poles believe Jews have too much influence in finance and the media. That's a very high number, comparable to poll results in countries with

robust right-wing movements like Austria, Hungary and Spain.

The oldest synagogue in Poland sits squarely in the middle of Warsaw, tucked in between office buildings and skyscrapers that offer a little seclusion from surrounding car horns and sirens. Nożyk Synagogue symbolizes both the long history of the Old Country and the reinvigoration of a new Jewish Poland. It's a modest building, made of old stone and brick, but it stood through the German and Russian shellings and demolition campaigns of World War II that destroyed **85 percent** of the city.



A tramway travels around a street of the Warsaw Jewish ghetto, displaying a star of David in the 1940s. Credit: AFP/Getty

These days, a few hundred Orthodox Jews worship at Nożyk. Konstanty Gebert, a member of the synagogue who works as a journalist and activist, remembers just how thin the Jewish community was worn under the Communist government. In 1967, Israel fought a war with its Arab neighbors, and the Soviet Union sharply criticized Israel. Poland, dependent on Soviet support, followed suit. Polish

politicians equated Jewish roots with support of Israel and launched a countrywide “anti-Zionist” campaign. “Organized Polish Jewry practically ends in 1968,” Gebert says. Those who stayed were Poles first and Jews second.

In the early '60s, Adam Szyc attended Jewish summer youth camp and winter camp too. At home, his mother used to prepare homemade challah and gefilte fish. “I remember I was a member of a choir,” he says, smiling and stroking a peppery beard. Today, Szyc is a shopkeeper who laughs a lot and presides over his shop counter like it's a lectern.

When I ask Szyc about 1968, though, he pauses for a long time to collect himself. He switches from lighthearted English to quiet Polish. “It was the most emotional time in my life,” he says. That year, Poland forced Jews to leave the country or renounce their religion, along with any ties to Israel. Tens of thousands emigrated, including almost everyone Szyc knew, and numerous Jewish institutions, like cultural clubs and summer camps, were shut down. As Gebert puts it, the Jewish community “had a kind of skeleton existence after that.”

Szyc's family stayed because making a living seemed more important than religious practice. His parents had survived World War II by hiding out in Russia, at the brink of starvation, and had returned to a city devastated by some of the war's worst fighting. So when Szyc's father found out he could support the family by making shoes in the new Poland, he told his son, “I have a flat. You can go to school. It's a good country.” They stayed, even if it meant stifling their cultural identity.

Poland's restrictions on Jews started to lighten around 1980, as the grip of Communism weakened. Gebert says that small groups of Jews started meeting in private, to discuss faith and culture. He remembers attending one of those early meetings and seeing a man standing in the doorway, peering in at the two dozen men there. The man was weeping. Gebert

asked him what was wrong. “I’ve never seen so many Jews in my life,” the man replied.

The few hundred who now worship at Nożyk, then, represent progress. So does Adam Szyk's little store. It’s attached to the synagogue and specializes in kosher food like his mother used to cook, along with frozen chickens, dill pickles and Israeli snacks. “It’s enough to live, but not enough to live good live,” says Szyk, smiling. “But, you know, at my age, OK.” So what if the Israeli tourists rarely buy his overpriced Israeli snacks? He has plenty of repeat customers. One of them is Paweł Bramson.



Paweł Bramson is seen in the Warsaw synagogue, July 2, 2010. A former truck driver and neo-Nazi skinhead, Paweł, 33, has since become an Orthodox Jew, covering his shaved head with a yarmulke and shedding his fascist ideology for the Torah. Credit: Adam Lach/The New York Times/Redux

I Had Become My Own Enemy

Back in 2001, Bramson was sober but still confused, and afraid to talk to a rabbi. “Maybe some extreme emotions could awaken in me,” he remembers worrying. “Maybe I could become aggressive. I was going to talk with an enemy.

Even though I had already learned that I had become my own enemy.”

The inside of Nożyk Synagogue is lined with dim corridors, old stairwells and an elegant central chamber that seats several hundred. When Bramson and his wife arrived, they sat down not with a Polish Jew but with an American rabbi named Michael Schudrich. He'd worked in Poland for most of the 1990s, and has been chief rabbi of Poland since 2004. When Schudrich speaks in English, you can hear New York City in his voice. He speaks like you might hope a rabbi would speak—almost improbably reassuring, always ready with a well-worn aphorism and a meaningful shrug.

The meeting impressed Bramson. The rabbi was calm, composed and willing to tell the couple as much about Judaism as they wanted to hear.

There was a great historical irony to that first meeting. In the 19th century, long before the state of Israel was created, Poland was a world capital of Jewish scholarship. Young American men traveled there to study the Talmud under some of the world's best-known rabbis. But here was an American rabbi, explaining the finer points of kosher food preparation to a Jewish Pole.

“It was complicated,” Bramson recalls. Prayer, rules, ritual. It was all strange and confusing: no meat with milk, no work on Saturdays, no women on the lower level of the synagogue during worship. He was like a soccer player at his first tennis match, wondering what the racquets were for and why there was a net across the center of the court. But he kept coming back.

Two Death Marches

In late 2013, Warsaw's first Jewish community center opened on a quiet residential street near the Old Town. It's a three-story building with big windows, long tables and bright, modern decor. On Sundays during its first summer, a different sort of Jewish community gathered here over

challah, cucumber salad and potato casserole. The day I visit, at least a dozen 20-somethings, several atheists and some young mothers are in attendance. Outside in the sun, a few kids are spraying each other with water.



22-year old Damian (2L) holds the 'havdalah' candle as Slawek (R) reads a prayer in the presence of other young Jewish students of the Jewish Community Center (JCC) Krakow, during a 'havdalah' ceremony, in the home of one of the students in Krakow, Poland, Sept. 28, 2013. Credit: Miriam Alster/Flash90/Redux

Two Jewish women, Agata Rakowiecka and Helise Lieberman, are telling me how much things have changed in recent years. Rakowiecka, a young Pole, runs the JCC. Lieberman, an American who's lived in Poland for two decades, directs the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland. Neither institution could have existed before Communism fell here.

Marian Turski, an 88-year-old who chairs the board of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, is visiting the community center for the first time. "We try—we both, Jews and Gentiles—to fill up the vacuum which appeared after the Shoah," he says, using the Hebrew word for the Holocaust. Turski went to Auschwitz long before it was a

tourist attraction—he was sent there in 1944 and survived two death marches. “We cannot cover [the vacuum] with people. But we can cover it with ideas, with imagination, with remembrance.”

Twenty-five years have passed since Communism fell. In that time, Lieberman argues, a new and diverse group of Jews has emerged, one that doesn't overlap much with the attendees of Nożyk Synagogue. The community is growing. There aren't many children in attendance, but only because they're all at summer camp. Lieberman argues that this diversity marks a return to the past—it replicates the diversity of Jews in prewar Poland, which included casual Jews, Yiddish speakers, Hasids and atheists. “A to Z—anti-Zionist to Zionist,” she says. Jews here try to overcome the burden of Poland's history, but at the same time, they embody it. “This is not the Old Country,” she says.

‘What the Hell Is This?’

Across from Nożyk Synagogue, there's a smaller building, with cracked paint and a courtyard. It houses a kosher restaurant on the second floor, which is where Paweł Bramson now works.

After learning about their Jewish roots, Bramson and his wife thought for months about what they should do. Bramson's mother cautioned him that conversion would be a bad idea—there was just so much anti-Semitism in Poland, she said. On the other hand, Paweł and Ola were thinking about the they hoped to have. “I couldn't imagine raising them without awareness of family history,” said Paweł.

Bramson grew a beard and started wearing a yarmulke. He and Ola began attending synagogue regularly, and Paweł decided to learn how to prepare kosher food. He trained to be a kosher butcher, serving Jewish tourists who traveled through Warsaw.



Jan Dawid Spiewak, founder of Jewish youth organization ZOOM, with ZOOM members in a cafe in Warsaw, Poland, Dec. 12, 2009. Credit: Rafał Milach/Anzenberger/Redux

The complicated rules and rituals now seem second nature to him. Before meeting me in the bright sunlight in front of the restaurant, he was supervising a factory that produces kosher chocolate. He still likes the same soccer team, though, and he's even going to a game tonight. It must be an interesting sight: Bramson with his beard and yarmulke surrounded by proudly rowdy Poles.

There are other flashes of his old life. One day a couple of years ago, Bramson was walking in Warsaw. He had just finished his work and was wearing his yarmulke. As he rounded a corner, he saw a familiar, well-built man with a shaven head. They looked at each other. "Bramson?" the man asked. "Is that you? What the hell is this?"

It was an old friend he hadn't seen in over a dozen years, since the days of window breaking and nationalistic soccer chants. Bramson took a step back. "I was getting the feeling that it could get aggressive." Bramson had spent his youth creating fear; now he felt afraid.

But the feeling proved misplaced. “He just hugged me,” Bramson says. The man asked how things were going. Then he explained: He’d seen Bramson in a TV documentary. Ever since Rabbi Schudrich encouraged him to share his story, Bramson has made regular appearances in the headlines.



The kosher store on 6 Twarda St., owned by Adam Szyz, in Warsaw, Poland. Pawel helps run the kosher restaurant nearby, and sometimes sources food from there. Credit: Daniel A. Gross

Word has gotten out. For Jews in Warsaw, the so-called “renewal” is by now old news. Agata Rakowiecka compares the Jewish community to a house that is quickly becoming a home. “In the beginning, you’re excited about the curtains and the sofa,” she says—you are amazed at the mere existence of the most basic things. Then, slowly, you start to figure out how to actually live in the house. “You start saying, This sofa is comfortable,” says Rakowiecka. “This is good for reading.”

In Poland, Rakowiecka and others were, at first, overwhelmed by the basics of a Jewish community: the weekly brunch at the community center, a Jewish summer camp for their sons and daughters to attend. Only now that

they've settled in are they beginning to discover the real rhythms of their new lives.

Paweł and Ola have two children that they are raising Jewish; their teenaged son even spent time in America, studying at the Talmudic Academy of Baltimore. Some of Warsaw's best-attended Jewish institutions, meanwhile, are a kindergarten and a school, the sorts of places that create and perpetuate a small community like this one.

Poland's not the Old Country it once was, but a small community of Jews is creating a vibrant new home there. It's only when the carpets begin to wear thin and the stairs round out that you know you've really built something.

Krzysztof Ignaciuk worked as an interpreter on this story.

You can follow Daniel A. Gross on Twitter [@readwriteradio](#).

This story was co-produced with [Latterly magazine](#), an independent publisher of international storytelling.

The word "Latterly" is written in a large, elegant, brown script font, centered on the page.

Credit: Latterly



Reuters

FALLING PRICES ARE BAD FOR YOU

**THE GLOBAL ECONOMY IS IN DANGER FROM A SPIRAL
OF DEFLATION AND CURRENCY WARS.**

Xu Li Chin isn't quite sure what has happened to his once-thriving business. For 20 years he has been the owner of a company just outside Shenzhen in southern China that supplies medical equipment. He started small and grew steadily, first via exports to a variety of countries in Southeast Asia, the United States and even Japan, and more recently riding the growth in China's own economy.

Now that homegrown growth has diminished, the industries he supplies suffer from overcapacity, as does his own, where price-cutting to maintain market share is now rampant. And last month his world got even more complicated when he lost a key export customer in Japan, which told him it was moving back to a homegrown supplier. The Japanese yen has depreciated by nearly 20 percent against the renminbi over the past two years, “and they said it made sense for them to switch” suppliers. “Now,” Xu says, “we’ll never be profitable this year, and to be honest I’m not sure when we will be.”

Competitive price cuts, slowing growth, the disruptive impact of rapid currency adjustments: Welcome to the global economy, circa 2015. If businessmen like Xu in China—ostensibly still one of the relative bright spots amid the gathering global gloom—is depressed, then the world has problems, quite possibly big ones.

Two specters now loom over the global economy, one tied directly to the other: deflation, and beggar thy neighbor currency wars. On January 22, Mario Draghi, chief of the European Central Bank (ECB), ended months of speculation and announced what asset markets pretty much the world over had been waiting to hear: The ECB would jump into the same pool that his counterparts in Tokyo and in Washington had long been swimming in. He said the ECB was going to implement quantitative easing (QE): European central banks would directly buy the sovereign bonds of the 19-member eurozone, effectively pumping money into the economy, which in theory would cause prices to rise. The ECB pledged to do so for as long as necessary in order to achieve price stability—or, as Draghi put it in a press conference, “a sustained adjustment in the path of inflation.”

In December, consumer prices in the eurozone had fallen 0.2 percent, the first such drop in five years, and with economic growth minimal pretty much throughout Europe, the prospect for further outright declines in the price level

had clearly concentrated the minds of European central bankers. (At least those outside of Germany's Bundesbank, which opposed the adoption of QE. For Germans, the prospect of Weimar-style hyperinflation always lies just around the corner.)

And Europe is not alone. A monthly survey of China's manufacturing sector—the HSBC/Markit Flash Manufacturing PMI—showed a slight contraction, but that's not what got people's attention: Input prices fell to their lowest level since the height of the global financial crisis nearly seven years ago. That partly reflected the steep drop in crude oil prices in the past few months—by itself a deflationary force globally—but input prices were weak across the board, reflecting a slowing economy more broadly. The report “enhanced our concerns over deflation,” said Nomura International economist Chang Chun Hua, and made it more likely the China's central bank will join the ECB in the fight against declining prices.

In a world of pronounced economic weakness, the United States is supposed to be the outlier—an economy finally gathering strength after years of financial crisis-induced slow growth. To fans of QE, the better growth numbers lately are a vindication for a U.S. Federal Reserve policy that's been in place since 2008. Under Ben Bernanke and now Janet Yellen, the Fed has bought roughly \$4.5 trillion in bank debt, mortgage backed securities and U.S. government bonds since the crisis. But even here the deflation hawks are worried. The U.S. consumer price index fell 0.4 percent in December, surprising most economists, and January will likely show a similar decline. After six years of near zero interest rates, those numbers were all but unthinkable to most mainstream analysts.

Why do declining prices—which, to the average consumer everywhere, would seem to be a benefit (who doesn't want to pay less for stuff?)—put the fear of God into economists and policymakers? For an answer to that, turn

only to the recent history of Japan, whose “bubble” economy burst in the early 1990s, and which tried and failed to escape from a deflationary spiral for about a decade.

Economists call a deflationary spiral the “fallacy of composition,” which, as Nomura Research Institute chief economist Richard Koo explains, refers to a situation “in which behavior that is correct for individuals or companies has undesirable consequences when everyone engages in it.” Thus, when you know that something you want to buy will be cheaper next month, it’s rational to hold off. But in a general deflation, that pretty much means everyone is holding back on buying anything, which contracts an economy and puts further downward pressure on prices, thus triggering the same decision-making loop.

Deflation, in other words, is how depressions arise—and it is to be avoided at all costs. Japan didn’t do a good job of that. From 1990 onward, falling land and equity prices alone destroyed 1.57 trillion yen in wealth. “No other nation in history has experienced such a large economic loss during peacetime,” according to Koo.



President of the European Central Bank Mario Draghi arrives for a press conference in Frankfurt, Germany, 22 Jan. 22, 2015. Draghi announced a landmark quantitative-easing program worth 60 billion euros (70 billion dollars) per month. Credit: Arne Dedert/picture-alliance/dpa/AP

Even before Bernanke became chairman of the Federal Reserve board—he was a governor for three years before succeeding Alan Greenspan—he had fixated on Japan’s experience. A scholar of the Great Depression while a professor at Princeton, he was fascinated by how deflation had brought down what was then the world’s second largest economy. As far back as 2003, Bernanke gave a speech in Tokyo in which he urged the Bank of Japan (BOJ) to figure out ways to, among other things, use its balance sheet to reflate the economy. He was, in other words, urging QE in Japan—which the BOJ eventually adopted—and which he would be forced to implement himself as Fed chairman in the U.S. when its own bubble burst in 2008.

Now Draghi has joined them. The question is, do QE and zero interest rate policies work? In Japan, recent data show an inflation rate above the flat line—2.6 percent in

December. To QE's supporters, that means the answer is: yes...eventually. In the United States, supporters say it helped prevent a second Great Depression and eventually helped to boost growth, particularly by aiding a recovery in interest rate-sensitive industries such as housing and autos.

Skeptics, however, note that there is more than \$2 trillion in Fed-supplied reserves sitting on bank balance sheets in the U.S.—meaning big banks took advantage of cheap money from the Fed but did not in turn lend all that money at similarly low rates to customers, as envisaged by the Fed. That is evidence, argues David Malpass, president of Encina Global, an economic consulting firm, that there's “no longer any link from central bank reserves to private sector money.” Skeptics like Malpass believe that Draghi will find the same to be true in Europe, and that there will be very little macro bang for the QE buck (or, in this case, euro).

At the same time, some economists warn, loose monetary policies feed what they say is becoming a destabilizing round of currency devaluations. Japan's QE policies have helped drive down the yen by nearly 20 percent against the dollar and China's renminbi in the past two years, and 14 percent against the euro. On the day Draghi announced his QE intentions, the euro weakened sharply against both the dollar and the yen. National politicians usually like weaker currencies because they believe they help domestic companies by fueling exports. That's why, when one country does it, others tend to follow. Currencies are already weaker in Southeast Asia, and some smart hedge fund managers have already begun to bet on devaluation in South Korea.

That leaves the two largest economies in the world, the United States and China, with a very significant decision to make: how to respond. Under Yellen, the Fed has stopped its QE bond-buying program and has said it wants to start “normalizing”—that is, hiking—interest rates later this year. But with the yen and euro continuing to weaken, an interest rate hike would only put increased upward pressure on the

dollar. Eventually, that will hit exports and make a lot of big U.S. companies squeal. A stronger dollar, meanwhile, helps contain any inflationary pressures in the U.S., which are barely existent to begin with. Thus, skepticism is mounting that there will be any increase in interest rates from the Fed this year—part of the reason the U.S. stock market reacted so positively in the wake of Draghi’s announcement and bond yields remained under pressure.

The men who run China’s economic policy have an even tougher decision to make. Their economy is slowing, and now all of Beijing’s major trading partners (except, for now, the United States) are devaluing their currencies. All compete with Chinese exports. For decades, Beijing has loosely tied its currency to the dollar, allowing a slow, steady appreciation in the face of incessant criticism from abroad that it was “manipulating” the renminbi to gain advantage. Beijing, in other words, feels the pain of men like Xu Li Chin, and if the globe’s quiet currency wars intensify, Beijing’s hand could be forced.

Is a once unthinkable thought—a Chinese devaluation—suddenly becoming thinkable? That would roil global markets. It would also, among other things, intensify the globe’s deflationary pressures, as prices for Chinese goods (in dollars or euros or yen) decline. “We’re at a point,” says a Tokyo-based hedge fund manager who has been warning of such a scenario for months, “that when pretty much everyone is trying [via devalued currencies] to export deflation, a lot of folks are likely to catch it.” QE or no QE.



Ali Al-Saadi/AFP/Getty

IRAQ'S ISIS FIGHT COULD BE A SECOND 'AWAKENING'

PROMINENT SUNNIS WANT TO FIGHT ISIS AND ARE ASKING FOR U.S. MONEY, ARMS AND TRAINING.

Just before Christmas, Atheel al-Nujaifi, a leading Iraqi politician, quietly slipped into Washington, D.C., with an urgent request that the White House provide arms and training for his 10,000-man Sunni militia. For seven months now, the United States has been bombing Iraq and Syria,

trying to beat back the so-called Islamic State (ISIS). But dislodging the world's most notorious jihadist group hasn't been easy, and Nujaifi was offering to help. The governor of Iraq's Nineveh province, he was forced to flee last summer when ISIS militants overran the country's Sunni-dominated north and west. In meetings with American officials, Nujaifi warned that unless the United States and its allies can quickly liberate the parts of Iraq under ISIS control, people there may soon learn to live with the militants. "Time," he said, "is not on our side."

Other Sunni leaders appear to be following his lead and asking the U.S. to support their militias, which they claim are willing to take up arms against the jihadist group. The White House is still weighing Nujaifi's request, but in a sign of where things may be headed, U.S. and Canadian special forces are training some 5,000 former Sunni policemen from Mosul at a camp that Nujaifi set up near Erbil, in Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region.

The scramble to join the fight recalls the vaunted *sahwa*, or "awakening" of 2005, when Sunnis joined forces with the U.S. to root out Al-Qaeda's affiliate in Iraq, the precursor to ISIS. And it comes as U.S. and coalition forces are training thousands of members of the Iraqi Army and Kurdish forces for a ground offensive this spring. Many American veterans of the first awakening say a second round isn't a bad idea. "We need allies," said James F. Jeffrey, who served as the charge d'affaires, then ambassador to Iraq during the American occupation. "If you're looking for a Sunni face to put on any kind of offensive, this is helpful." Patrick Skinner, who served as a CIA officer in Iraq, agreed. "Right now, there are a lot of bad options in Iraq," he said. "This might be one of the better ones."

A second awakening also would help advance an important U.S. goal in Iraq: Integrating Sunnis back into the Iraqi military and government. A minority group in Iraq, Sunnis have long feared that leaders in Baghdad are doing

the bidding of their Shiite neighbors in Tehran. After U.S. combat troops withdrew in 2011, sectarian tensions flared as former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki reneged on his promise to incorporate Sunni fighters into the army, cracked down on Sunni politicians and allowed Shiite militias to terrorize Sunni towns. When ISIS fighters stormed into Iraq last summer, the group exploited local anger and alienation, and convinced some Sunni former military commanders to join its ranks. With Washington now pushing for a nuclear accord with Iran, and cooperating with its longtime adversary in the war against ISIS, some Sunnis remain highly suspicious of allying with the Americans.

Since Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has been in office, the U.S. has pushed a plan to form national guard brigades in Iraq's 18 provinces, largely to encourage Sunnis in the western and northern parts of the country to defend their territory. A bill to create these brigades has been bottled up in the country's Shiite-dominated parliament, so in the short-term, some experts say, a new awakening could help bring Sunnis into the fold. "What Nujaifi and the other Sunnis are effectively saying is, 'OK, if we can't go the national guard route yet because it's getting hung up in Parliament, let's do this informally and get Sunnis into the battle, fighting and feeling like they're part of the reconquest of Iraq,'" said Kenneth M. Pollack, an Iraq expert at the Brookings Institution who met with Nujaifi in Washington.

Nujaifi isn't the only influential Sunni looking to take part in this reconquest. Last month, a group of political and tribal leaders from Anbar Province in Iraq's Sunni heartland met with Vice President Joe Biden at the White House to discuss ways they could help combat ISIS. The delegation included Anbar Governor Sohaib Al-Rawi and Sheikh Abu Risha, the head of the Iraq Awakening Council.

Another prominent Sunni leader joining the fray is Mudhar Shawkat, a former member of Parliament and an old-line patrician. Now living in London, where he fled

in 2012 to escape death threats from Shiite supporters of Maliki, Shawkat says his followers include Sunni luminaries such as former Lieutenant General Ra'ad al-Hamdani and former Major General Nouri al-Dulaimi, both highly respected Iraqi commanders now living in exile in Jordan. "We can put forward a really big force very, very easily," he told Newsweek. "All we need to do is get these generals to go on the radio and ask people to sign up as recruits, and there will be tens of thousands of them."

Shawkat said he plans to hold a conference in Erbil later this winter that will include hundreds of former Sunni Iraqi officers, along with the leaders of Iraq's largest and most influential Sunni tribes. Shawkat said that, during an upcoming visit to Washington, he will ask the Obama administration to send an observer to the event. Eventually, he said, he would like the U.S. to endorse his militia to win funding from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. "The American role is essential," he said. "I don't think anything can happen without the Americans."

But a second Sunni awakening is only a good idea if the U.S. can be sure the Iraqi warlords appealing for arms, money and training can muster the necessary strength to defeat their jihadist foe. In Shawkat's case, it's not clear if the former military commanders and prominent tribal figures he claims as allies are on his side. "If I were the U.S. government and I were assessing this, I would ask, does this guy really have a force?" Pollack said. "I'd say, 'You want us to arm, equip and train your men? Show me the men. Give us the names.'" Pollack said U.S. officials also need to determine if the Sunnis seeking American assistance are proxies for other regional players, like Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and even Iran. "There are a lot of different questions you want to ask before you start training these guys," he said.

Pentagon planners say 50,000 troops, backed by U.S. airpower, are needed to break ISIS's hold. They hope to do

this by cutting off ISIS supply lines from Syria, besieging the militants in Mosul and other Iraqi strongholds, and then systematically picking the jihadis apart. But since the Iraqi army and Kurdish units now being trained amount to a force about half the necessary size, adding more men to the mix is critical. The 5,000 Sunni policemen now being trained outside Erbil are a good start. And given the Sunnis' eagerness to join the fight—and the White House's aversion to sending U.S. combat troops back to Iraq—there's a good chance other Sunni militias may bring the anti-ISIS force up to full strength.

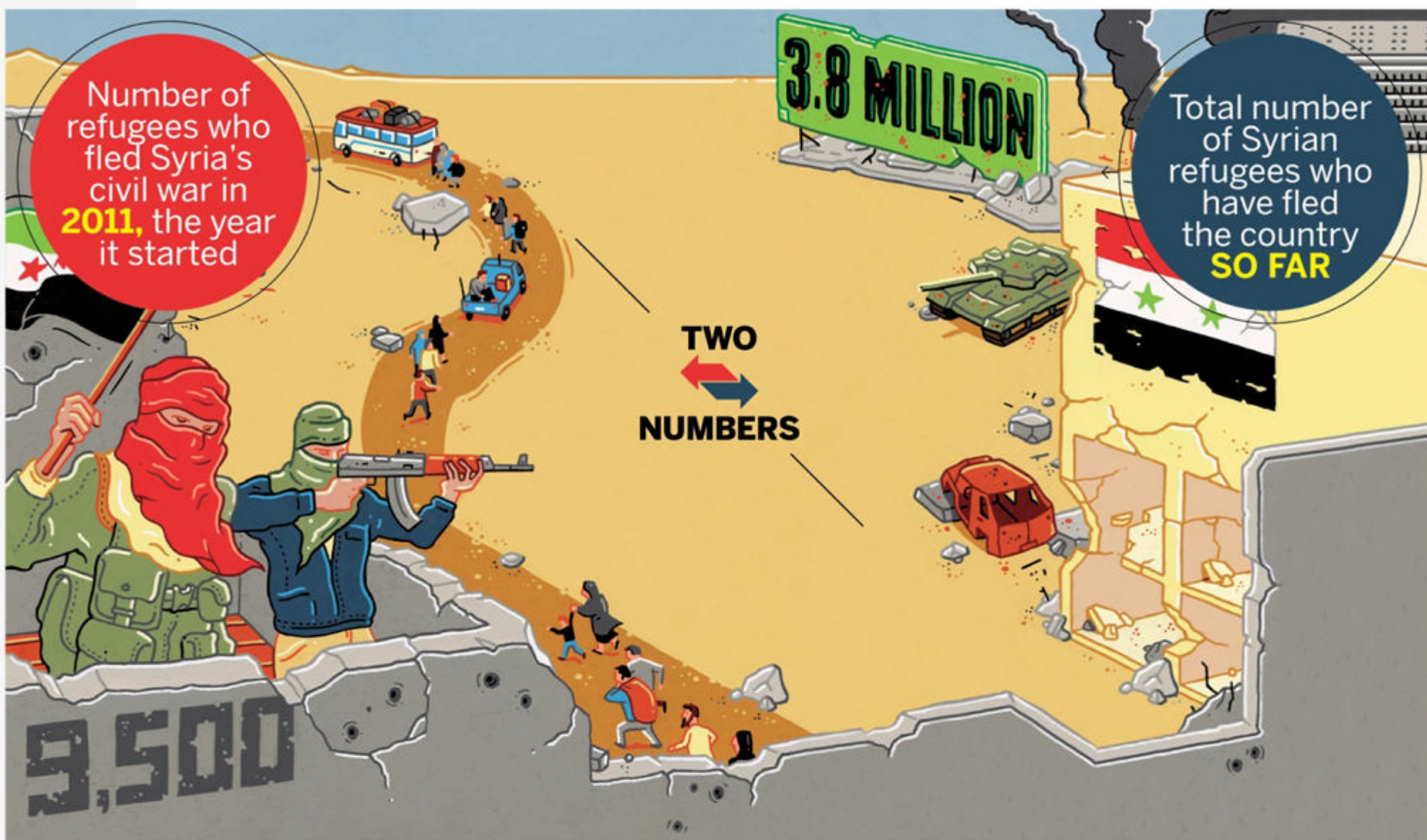
Sunni leaders know that a savage battle lies ahead, and many warn that if the counteroffensive works, they won't repeat the mistake they made after the first awakening, when they stood by as Maliki ran roughshod over them. This time, these Sunni leaders say, they'll demand a quasi-autonomous region, defended by their own militia, much like the arrangement the Kurds enjoy with the federal government.

Shawkat envisions an Iraq composed of self-governing Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish regions, with Baghdad serving as the country's capital inside a federal zone. It's an idea that President Barack Obama rejects, but Biden and many Iraq experts have long championed. "There is no other solution," Shawkat insists. "There has been too much blood, too much destruction. Now we need to make the best of what we have."

Pollack agrees with the idea of breaking Iraq into three federal regions, but strongly doubts Abadi and the ruling Shiites would ever allow the Sunnis to form a semi-autonomous area. Any such move would effectively remove a third of the country from Baghdad's control, yet still require the Iraqi government to pay all its bills. Unlike the Kurdish region, the Sunni areas have no oil and therefore little means to contribute to the treasury. "It's a terrible

deal,” Pollack says. Yet without separation, he says, Iraq’s Shiites and Sunnis could remain locked in a sectarian war.

Nujaifi, however, remains committed to the old Iraq. Though he’s a prominent Sunni figure, he rejects the idea of a semi-autonomous state, saying he’s confident Abadi will work to make Sunnis feel part of the country. “This isn’t the time to talk about autonomy,” he says. “First, we Iraqis all have to come together to defeat ISIS.”



Jasper Rietman.

TWO NUMBERS: HOMESICK FOR SYRIA

AS WARRING PARTIES NEGOTIATE IN MOSCOW, SYRIAN REFUGEES WAIT IN THE COLD.

Photographs of a **rare snowstorm** in January that flattened refugee camp tents in Lebanon and Jordan brought new attention to the plight of millions of Syrians driven from their homes by nearly four years of war.

Since March 2011, fighting between troops loyal to Syrian President Bashar Assad and opposition forces, coupled with brutal violence by the militant group ISIS, has

resulted in a mass exodus that shows no signs of reversal. Surrounded by violence on all sides, half of Syria's prewar population of around 22 million have abandoned their homes, including 3.8 million refugees outside Syria and 7.6 million internally displaced. With their savings dwindling and unable to work or attend school, many of the refugees are living in **dire poverty**.

More than 95 percent of the refugees who have escaped Syria are in Jordan, Lebanon or Turkey, and thousands more have sought safety in Iraq and Egypt. Faced with social services stretched to the limit, Lebanon recently started requiring Syrians to **obtain a visa** at the border before entering the country.

Around 209,000 refugees have sought asylum in Europe, more than half of them in Germany and Sweden. Germany has granted asylum to the most Syrian refugees of any Western country, 3,788. The United States has so far not received many applications for asylum, according to Simon Henshaw, principal deputy assistant secretary for the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. He expects to receive more applications in the coming years, and between 1,000 and 2,000 refugees are expected to be resettled in the U.S. this year.

The vast majority of Syrian refugees, however, are waiting to go home. Representatives of Assad's government and some rebel groups met in **Moscow for peace talks** this week, but the chances of a breakthrough look slim. In the meantime, it's cold in the refugee camps.



Nasim al Sanani

THE CRISIS IN YEMEN DEALS A BLOW TO THE WAR ON TERROR

**AMERICA'S WAR AGAINST AL-QAEDA HITS A LAND
MINE IN SANAA.**

Jamal Benomar was worried. Late last month, he was talking to me on the phone as he waited to fly to the Persian Gulf. Yemen was on the verge of collapse, and Benomar, the United Nations special envoy to the country, was hoping to bring its warring factions together.

For years, the Moroccan-born British diplomat had been warning international leaders that stabilizing Yemen's internal politics was critical to defeating Al-Qaeda. But as he landed in Yemen last month, the country, which is heavily divided over religious, tribal and other alliances, continued to crumble. "Maybe now," Benomar said, the world "will listen."

In January, the Houthis, an armed group in northern Yemen, allegedly with ties to Iran, tightened their grip around the capital city of Sanaa. Gunmen surrounded the presidential palace and trapped the Western-backed leader, Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi, at his nearby residence.

The news sent shudders across the region, where many already fear Iranian influence. After speaking with Benomar, the U.N. Security Council released a unified statement, supporting Hadi. The Saudi-backed Gulf Cooperation Council, a regional body of Arab countries, later did the same, calling Hadi's ouster a "coup" and vowing "all necessary means" to return him to power.

To no avail. On January 22, Hadi, along with Prime Minister Khaled Bahah and the rest of the Yemeni government, resigned. And Benomar began scrambling to meet with local leaders—from tribal elders to business tycoons—to try to peacefully end the crisis.

His task remains daunting. Not only are many in the Gulf and the West worried about Iran gaining a foothold in Yemen; they're also concerned the Houthis may be able to exploit sectarian tensions and hinder America in its war against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

Benomar—and Yemen—have been at this crossroads before. In 2011, the Arab Spring spread to the streets of Sanaa, as protesters forced longtime strongman Ali Abdullah Saleh to step down. He was once considered a linchpin in the fight against terror, but the U.S. turned against him after the protests and now considers him untrustworthy.

Not long after Saleh's ouster, Benomar, along with other diplomats and a coterie of Yemeni leaders, helped steer the country toward peace. In 2012, the nation elected Hadi in what many observers called a remarkably inclusive political process. Yemen, a country largely known for chaos and qat, a local stimulant, was now being hailed as a promising experiment in democracy. And the government in Sanaa seemed even more committed than Saleh was to fighting terror.

Indeed, with Hadi's backing, the CIA and U.S. Air Force increased their use of killer drones to hunt down suspected Al-Qaeda terrorists. As President Barack Obama put it in a September 2014 speech, the U.S.'s "strategy of taking out terrorists who threaten us, while supporting partners on the front lines, is one that we have successfully pursued in Yemen."

But not everyone was happy with the new government. Namely the Houthis, who objected to a proposed constitution that would set up a federal system and divide the country into six regions. "They wanted more territory, with natural resources and access to the sea, under their control, and they couldn't get it," said Nidaa Hilal, a former U.N. consultant in Yemen.

The Houthis are members of Yemen's Zaydi sect, a Shiite offshoot, which some observers compare to Hezbollah, Iran's Lebanese proxy, which boasts both a militant and a political wing. The comparison isn't completely apt (unlike Hezbollah, the Houthis operate only inside Yemen). But like Lebanon's Party of God before it, the Houthis' rise came by way of force, not democracy. Last year, armed Houthis started moving south from their mountainous enclaves in the north, an operation that culminated in January's coup.

For those who once had high hopes for the Arab Spring in Yemen, the Houthis' takeover has left them feeling bitter and jaded. "The Houthis almost want to make Yemenis

regret overthrowing Saleh,” said Farea al-Muslimi, a Yemeni writer and activist.

Washington is also concerned. Despite news reports to the contrary, the U.S. hasn’t halted its drones program in Yemen. Late January, American drones killed three suspected Al-Qaeda operatives in the Marib province in northern Yemen. But with the Houthis in control of Sanaa, the White House may be forced to try coordinating counterterrorism moves with a group whose slogan is “Death to America, death to Israel, curse on the Jews, victory to Islam.”

As we spoke on the phone, Benomar mentioned Chérif and Saïd Kouachi, the brothers who attacked French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in January. Several years ago, at least one of them reportedly traveled to Yemen to train with Al-Qaeda. The 12 people the Kouachis killed in Paris were painful reminders of how chaos in the Middle East can easily reach Western shores.

With armed gunmen patrolling the streets, the turmoil in Yemen is unlikely to subside anytime soon. Because the Houthis are a Shiite offshoot, their power grab has put Yemen’s majority Sunnis on edge, which could be a recruitment boon for Al-Qaeda, a predominantly Sunni group.

Not everyone is pessimistic. Some say the Houthis will find it hard to govern and stoke sectarian tensions at the same time. “The Houthis will increase the pool [of recruits] for Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in the short term,” said Al Sharjabi, a member of Yemen’s reformist Al-Watan party. “But eventually, you can’t run the country this way.”

Perhaps. But for now, Benomar must try to communicate with 16 political groups that agree on practically nothing. Going forward, he said, the Houthis will try to plant their loyalists as “No. 2’s” in a variety of government ministries.

And the trick will be to find a credible leader who can run the country without being intimidated by the men with guns.

Saleh, the fallen dictator, apparently has some ideas. He's kept his hand in Yemen's politics from afar and has been working with some members of the Houthi leadership. He's allegedly pushing for an early presidential election so that his son, Ahmed, can emerge the winner. That, reformers say, would almost certainly bury any hope for political progress.

After years of trying to get everyone to pay attention to Yemen, Benomar finally has a captive audience. The only problem: It may be too late.



Matej Divizna/Getty

3-D SCANNING COMES TO THE DOCTOR, AND THE PALEONTOLOGIST, AND THE FASHION RUNWAY

**3-D SCANNERS ARE NOW EVERYWHERE, FROM
DOCTORS' OFFICES TO CLOTHING STORES.**

At the 2015 **Consumer Electronics Show** held in early January in Las Vegas, I stood in the center of an array of

circling cameras, remaining completely still for 12 seconds. Minutes later, a computer connected to the booth produced a near-perfect 3-D representation of myself—almost too realistic. My posture, I saw, reflected the self-consciousness I felt about being made into a statue. In short time, the company behind this contraption, Artec Group's Shapify, forged this image into a miniature sculpture of my likeness, and I got my very own "Shapie."

The idea of being sculpturized seemed a little silly at first. But the eagerness of visitors to the Artec booth and the rapid growth of the company—which now has scanning locations in 25 countries—reveal a real desire for the service. Even President Barack Obama **had a bust of himself made** in December.

From medicine to fashion, 3-D scanning is also taking off in a variety of other fields. A growing number of plastic surgeons and other doctors use scanners for planning procedures and surgery. And a firm called **Stratasys** uses scanners (and 3-D printers) to create orthodontic devices like retainers. In many major cities, you can also find companies that employ these tools **to make customized clothing**—no tailor necessary.

Science is also finding novel uses for the technology. For example, paleontologist Louise Leakey and colleagues recently used a handheld scanner to create 3-D images of several fossils in Kenya, in order to create a permanent record for researchers to study—the scans will survive even if the fossils themselves are later destroyed or looted.

While 3-D scanners aren't new, until recently they've been expensive, large and immobile. Several companies, Artec among them, have figured out how to miniaturize the technology, and some devices are within the reach of general consumers. One of Artec's professional-grade scanners can be had for around \$20,000, though other companies make cheaper versions that are **basically modified webcams**, for as little as \$100.

Many of the more affordable devices, including Artec's, are "structured light scanners," emitting multiple parallel beams, which are spaced at an exact distance apart. The computer knows the precise dimensions of these light patterns and examines how these appear on the object, using that information to measure and reconstruct the object's features in precise detail. So if your likeness is about to be captured for posterity, make sure your pants aren't wrinkled. I learned that one the hard way.



Ed Araquel/CTMG

TECHNOLOGY PUTS THE OSCARS ON DEATH ROW

**KISS THAT POPCORN GOODBYE: AUDIENCES MOVE
FROM THEATERS TO HAND-HELDS.**

If you think the Best Picture **Oscar** field seems lame this year, just wait. Movies are only going to suck more.

Economic and technological forces are pushing the peculiar art form of the movie toward the same fate as opera and epic poems. Art forms rarely die, but they do get

out of step with the times and wind up huddled in a niche, shivering in the cold.

As that happens to movies, talent will flow into more popular and lucrative art forms. It's no coincidence that Woody Allen just signed a **deal** to produce a series for Amazon.com. As the best talent leaves the movies, the quality of movies will plunge.

The **economic side** of movies already looks like Tokyo after a Godzilla constitutional. In 2014, the number of people who went to the movies was the lowest in two decades. In 2002, movie attendance in North America hit an all-time high, as theaters sold 1.57 billion tickets. Last year, that dropped to 1.26 billion—down 300 million tickets. Revenue is down 5 percent versus 2013, the biggest decline in nine years. Revenue from other sources, like home video and international showings, isn't saving Hollywood's tuchas like it used to. Americans are watching cheap streaming movies more and buying movies less, and overseas audiences love our cartoonish flicks like *The Avengers* and *Frozen* but don't give a crap about stuff like *Selma* or *Boyhood*.

At the same time, movies keep getting more expensive to make. Universal Pictures brags that it focuses on “modestly budgeted” films like *Unbroken*, yet even those cost about \$70 million. Now that social media spreads opinions about new movies instantly, a movie has to win a big audience the first weekend or that investment is sunk. There is no middle class in moviemaking—only the few blockbusters, then everything else. The top 1 percent take all. Where's the Occupy Hollywood movement?

These economic troubles are not a blip. They are a trend driven by technology, and the technology is not going away unless some massive cyberattack fries every last digital device.

First of all, theaters have always been the financial locomotive of movies, and technology keeps making them

less and less relevant. At this month's Consumer Electronics Show, dozens of companies showed off huge, curved, 4K TVs that display movies as well as any theater screen. Combine that with HD streaming, microwave popcorn and a bottle of Chianti, and there's only one reason left to go to a theater: to see a movie the day it comes out.

But even that advantage is going to fade away. Sony simultaneously released the apparently awful *The Interview* online and in theaters and made \$15 million in four days. Other studios are calculating how long before that release strategy is the norm. "Everybody has to take a look at it because the world has changed," Nikki Rocco, who just retired after nearly 50 years as Universal's head of domestic distribution, told *The Associated Press*.

The plight goes much deeper than just theaters. Late last year at a conference in New York, Amazon's Jeff Bezos got talking about why books can be a tough sell in today's market. As he sees it, books don't compete against other books. Instead, books compete against every other way you can spend your time. For a lot of the population, the time investment in a book is too much to ask. Even if books were free (and, they are, at the library), the reading of books would not significantly increase.

The movie as we know it is generally a 90- to 180-minute, one-off production—a single, long work meant to be watched beginning to end. How does that format make sense today? A huge and growing amount of entertainment is being consumed on the 7 billion mobile devices swarming the planet. People peering into phones and tablets want stuff in smaller doses. Movies are too long for that medium. Money and young talent are flowing to short-burst programs like Smosh and RealAnnoyingOrange. The duo behind Smosh, which you've probably never heard of, is **worth nearly \$6 million**.

Yet every civilization needs long-form storytelling, rich in character and complex plot lines. Over the past decade,

audiences and talent have been drawn to series like *The Sopranos*, *Breaking Bad* and *Game of Thrones*. As long-form visual storytelling, that format is better than movies for our time and technology. A single show, meant for home or portable screens, is an hour or less, which makes it more competitive against other lures for your time. One show in a series pulls you into another—a hook missing from movies. With streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon, you can watch these stories anytime, anywhere—one at a time or all night on a binge.

The center of gravity in entertainment is shifting. Matthew McConaughey did *True Detective*, Tea Leoni is in *Madame Secretary*, Netflix signed up Adam Sandler, and Amazon nabbed Woody to create an unspecified series. (I'm rooting for an update of 1973's *Sleeper*: After 42 years in the future, Miles Monroe returns to New York in 2015 as an old guy and invents the orgasmatron.) The best talent will increasingly want these kinds of long-form gigs. The prestige is there. The money is there. The artistic freedom is there. And most of all, the audience is there.

If McConaughey or Allen—or Christopher Nolan, Robert Downey Jr., Meryl Streep—tie up with a series that goes on for a few years, they'll have less time to make movies. If the most talented directors, writers and actors make fewer movies, then more movies will be made by the second string. More movies will suck, and so will the movie business.

To borrow a phrase, we've seen this movie before. It goes like this: New technology changes the way media is consumed. Declining revenue leads to cost-cutting, which drives away talent. That leads to a lower-quality product, which sends audiences elsewhere, which inevitably results in more declining revenues—and the negative spiral keeps feeding on itself.

I actually had a bit part in that movie a decade ago. It was called *Newspapers*.



Joel Sartore/NGS Image Collection

PRIME-TIME SLIME

SLUG INFESTATIONS ARE CROPPING UP ON SUSTAINABLE NO-TILL FARMS, POSSIBLY DUE TO THE OVERUSE OF NEONICOTINOID PESTICIDES.

“If you went and looked at the right time of day, the whole farm would be silvery with slime.”

That’s how pest consultant Gerard Troisi describes the slug dilemma in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. Outbreaks of the snotty pest are troubling the state’s soybean farms, and it seems as if Troisi’s phone buzzes more frequently each spring, as people seek his expertise. This year, he might add a new recommendation: fewer neonics.

Neonics—or neonicotinoids—are a popular type of neurotoxic insecticide, and a **recently published report** shows that slugs can consume the compounds and survive. The slimeballs then act as a poisoned meal for predatory ground beetles, which typically keep the slugs and other farm pests in check. After the poisoned beetles perish, the slugs that didn't get eaten run amok and damage farms. It's the first evidence that neonics travel via the food chain, from one animal to the next.

Neonics cover about half of America's soybean seeds and 95 percent of corn seeds, the two biggest cash crops for commercial farms in the country. They are designed to ward off seed-munching insects, and in theory, shouldn't bother carnivores like predatory ground beetles, which eat slugs or other bugs. But in recent years the compounds have been found to have some unintended environmental effects. In 2013, Europe **suspended neonic use** for two years after the pesticide was linked to the die-offs of honeybees, vital crop pollinators. Though they are still in use in the States, the **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency concluded** this past October that "these seed treatments provide little or no overall benefits to soybean production in most situations."

"One of my main concerns with neonics is that they've been used regardless of need," says insect ecologist John Tooker of Pennsylvania State University, who co-authored the study published in December 2014 in the *Journal of Applied Ecology*.

His co-author, ecologist Maggie Douglas, says their discovery was a bit of an accident. Three years ago, Douglas was in a lab studying which beetle species are the best natural predators for slugs. She borrowed a few soybeans from a colleague as slug food, not knowing that they were precoated with the neonic thiamethoxam. "When I came back the next day, most of the ground beetles in the soil plots had died," says Douglas. When they moved the experiment outdoors and into crop fields, they found that

neonic-fed slugs killed 31 percent of nearby beetle predators during the first month of the farm season. With beetles out of the way, the slugs multiplied. And when the slug population exploded, the farms fell apart: Soybean densities dropped by 20 percent, and crop yields overall fell 5 percent.

Douglas conducted the tests on no-tillage farms, a brand of sustainable agriculture that's expanding in the U.S. If you've ever seen a tractor plow a field with a row of rotating blades, that's tillage. The process aerates the soil and rips up weeds, but also releases carbon into the atmosphere and causes erosion that washes agrochemical runoff into water supplies. A nationwide push has steadily removed tillage practices since 2000, especially in mid-Atlantic states in order to preserve the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay. No-till farms now account for over a third of U.S. crops (and 58 percent of Pennsylvania's).

No tillage creates a lot of leftover crop material, "which is fantastic for field production and good healthy soils. But one trade-off is that it leaves great food for slugs," says ecologist Andy Michel, an assistant professor at Ohio State University. Meanwhile, a warmer and wetter climate over the past few years in Pennsylvania has compounded the issue—slugs love moist weather.

Yet the influence of neonics isn't confined to commercial farms. The compounds can wash into **general water supplies**: "**As little as 2 percent** of the active compound [in neonics] is taken up by the plant," says Jonathan Lundgren of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. "The rest resides in the soil or washes into waterways."

Neonics are tough to remove from the environment, sticking in the soil for **up to six years**. They're also the millennials of the agrochemical world, with most being patented in the mid-1980s and early 1990s. When given jobs, the compounds squelch insect pest outbreaks, but as new arrivals, their societal influence remains undefined.

The extent of the human repercussions of neonic spread remains controversial. Farmers briefly exposed to high doses of imidacloprid, a neonic as well as the most popular pesticide in the world, **can experience acute illness like dizziness or vomiting**, but neonic levels in drinking water and food produce are much lower. However, long-term studies on human health haven't been conducted.

Based on animal studies, neonics don't cause cancer, but some do carry a **slight risk** of adversely affecting the development of neurons and brain structures. On the latter point, European and the U.S. official split opinion. In 2013, the European Food Safety Authority issued a **human health warning** for two neonics—acetamiprid and imidacloprid—citing a risk of harming child neurodevelopment, but the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) **countered** that the “recommendations would not impact the agency's current regulatory positions on these chemicals.”

Plus if slugs can ingest and pass neonics to predatory ground beetles, other organisms might tolerate the insecticides too and transmit them through the food chain. Over the course of her research, Douglas also detected neonics in earthworms, important food for birds and other animals. Last July, neonics **were tied to declining bird populations** in the Netherlands.

So what's the remedy? Neonics are pervasive, and no-till in America is here to stay. One solution might be to douse the fields with metaldehyde, our one and only anti-slug chemical. But that carries its own risks. Metaldehyde is toxic for wildlife and domestic pets if consumed in large doses, plus **impossible to remove** if it rinses into waterways.

Jonathan Lundgren, a research entomologist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, argues that the solution is to rely less on chemicals like neonics and more on natural competition between pests and predators. One way to encourage competition is through wider use of cover crops, which farmers plant to maintain soil quality rather than

harvest for profit. When planted earlier in the season, cover crops add green matter to the field, says Troisi, which can serve as an alternative food source for slugs so they don't attack soybeans. Cover crops also provide a habitat for slug's natural enemies like ground beetles or **nematodes**, which could boost their numbers and serve as a form of biocontrol.

It could save our crops, our planet and us. "We need biodiversity. For every pest insect species out there, there are 1,700 species of insects that are beneficial," says Lundgren. Besides pollination, these bugs can bolster farm soil, improve the **taste of beer** and feed animals, like fish, that in turn feed us. In the end, says Lundgren, "we cannot live without these beneficial insects. Human society would **grind to a halt**."

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H. ARMSTRONG ROBERTS/CLASSICSTOCK/CORBIS

PUBERTY COMES EARLIER AND EARLIER FOR GIRLS

**GIRLS ARE ENTERING PUBERTY FASTER THAN EVER,
AND JEOPARDIZING THEIR HEALTH AND HAPPINESS.**

At age 6, Rebecca's body began to develop in ways that seemed unusual. Her mother, Ellen, had noticed a change in Rebecca's breast area, but some of the other little girls, the chubbier ones at least, also seemed to be carrying extra

weight there. But there was also the hair that had begun to appear under her daughter's arms.

"People assumed she was so much older than she was, but still she would cry sometimes, and people would look at you like, How old is that kid?" says Ellen, who spoke to Newsweek under condition of anonymity.

When a test showed Rebecca's bone age to be 10½, a pediatric endocrinologist diagnosed "precocious puberty." While the exact cause is unknown, this endocrine disorder is triggered by the early release of hormones in the brain, a circumstance that hurls a child into sexual maturation years before the usual age.

This sudden sexual development in a child so young can be unnerving to parents. "My daughter is 7 years and 10 months old. She started having body odor at 5 and breast buds at 6," one mother wrote recently in a group chat about the condition. She wrote, too, of her daughter's "roller-coaster emotions," a common complaint from parents observing massive mood swings, PMS-like symptoms and other "teen emotions" in daughters just beginning the first grade—and in some cases even younger.

The condition affects individuals in different ways. According to Ellen, the most troubling sign in Rebecca was growing six inches in one year. "There was a lot of stress mainly due to her height," says Ellen. "People would say, 'Oh, she's so tall!,' not thinking or anything, and you could see her little face get sad."

"People thought I was older," says Rebecca, who is now 14. "[Like] I had failed kindergarten or something." Her mother says, "She had to be very mature a lot of the time, but on the flip side, she was all into Disney and still a little girl."

Unlike Rebecca, many precocious kids lose their interest in Disney and little-girl things and begin to act, well, the age of their bodies. The mother of one 8-year-old wrote that her

daughter “is a very sexual being. Although she does not by definition understand what ‘sexiness’ means, she exhibits a very particular awareness of her body and wants other people to notice her.” Another mother observed, “It is really as if my 6-year-old has a 12-year-old trapped in her body.”

Living in a Sea of Chemicals

In girls, puberty is commonly defined as breast development, growth of pubic hair and menarche, the beginning of the menstrual cycle. At the turn of the 20th century, the average age for an American girl to get her period was 16 to 17. Today, that number has plummeted to less than 13, according to data from the [National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey](#). The trend has been attributed to the epidemic of overweight children and a greater exposure to pollution, which does bad things to developing bodies and accelerates the timing of a girl’s first menstruation.

Environmental toxins also cause many girls to develop breasts at an earlier age than in the past. Compared with 20 years ago, American girls today begin developing breasts anywhere from one month to four months earlier, a significant difference. At the same time, the number of girls who begin to develop early is increasing. “Just a generation ago, less than five percent of girls started puberty before the age of 8; today that percentage has more than doubled,” note Dr. Louise Greenspan and Dr. Julianna Deardorff in *The New Puberty: How to Navigate Early Development in Today’s Girls*.

Among the toxins causing this trend, the biggest offenders are plastic compounds, in particular [phthalates](#), man-made chemicals found all over the place: in plastic food and beverage containers, carpeting, shampoos, insect repellents, vinyl flooring, shower curtains, plastic toys and in the steering wheels and dashboards of most cars. Our bodies cannot metabolize phthalates, which interfere with the endocrine system—the body’s system of glands and

hormones—and harm fat cells. Indirectly, phthalates may cause weight gain and so influence the timing of puberty. “The No. 1 factor that was pushing girls into puberty early was their body mass index,” says Dr. Frank Biro, director of education and a professor in the Division of Adolescent Medicine at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

Our children are living in a “sea of chemicals,” says Dr. Marcia E. Herman-Giddens, a professor of public health at the University of North Carolina. She argues that children are speeding into puberty before they’re ready, and that this early maturation is both the symptom of bodily damage that has already occurred and the probable cause of health consequences they may expect in the future.

Getting Hit On

“It’s one of the most robust findings in studies of psychological development,” says Dr. Laurence Steinberg, a professor of psychology at Temple University, and author of *Age of Opportunity: Lessons From the New Science of Adolescence*. He is referring to recent research demonstrating how earlier-maturing girls are more likely to become depressed. One *2014 study*, for instance, finds “girls with earlier [puberty] timing had higher levels of depression symptoms at age 10 years.” Another *study* echoes these findings, while also suggesting such effects may be long-lasting. Along with higher rates of depression, younger girls who enter puberty earlier than their peers are more prone to obesity and drug abuse.

When children enter puberty, their brains undergo changes—brought on by the flood of pubertal hormones—that “makes them especially attentive to what other people think of them and especially responsive to social reward,” says Steinberg.

Dopamine, a neurotransmitter crucial to the experience of pleasure, floods and effectively remodels the pathway between the behavior-regulating prefrontal cortex and the brain’s reward center. “The adolescent brain is one where

the accelerator is pressed to the floor before there's a good braking system in place," says Steinberg. "This gap between when the brain is easily aroused and when the braking is in place creates a period of vulnerability." With puberty occurring at a younger age, this period begins earlier, when a girl may be inadequately prepared.

After all, early maturing girls naturally attract unwanted attention. "You encounter a young lady in the mall and she looks like she's 15 years old," says Biro. "You will interact with her like she's 15, but suppose she's 11?" And because of the way her brain is being flooded with hormones, a young girl hanging out with older kids most likely wants to please and may be more inclined to go along with the crowd.

Meanwhile, no matter how physically developed a girl is, her psychosocial maturation remains anchored to her chronological age. "These young girls get, let's use the term "hit on," by older boys and men and how can they be prepared to deal with it? Obviously, grown women have a hard [enough] time dealing with unwanted sexual attention," observes Herman-Giddens.

The brain is highly plastic, and stressful experiences like these take their toll. Early-maturing girls are more likely to **smoke cigarettes**, they are at high risk for **substance use**, and they have higher rates of **eating disorders**. Though most of this fallout is experienced while they are young, some of the consequences extend into adult life. Substance problems and depression experienced at a young age can easily return, for instance. Then there are health problems that those who undergo early puberty are more likely than the general population to experience later on in their lives, like higher blood pressure and cardiovascular problems.

"Puberty is considered one of those windows of susceptibility," says Biro, when the body is especially sensitive to the negative health impact of social and environmental stressors. In particular, the actively maturing breast tissue of a girl, unlike the breast tissue of a full-grown

woman, is more vulnerable to damaging environmental pollutants.

Today's girl is both starting puberty earlier and going through it more slowly, according to Biro, which means a girl remains in this high-risk state for a longer amount of time. In an [article](#) he co-authored with Deardorff and others, Biro found up to a 30 percent increased risk for breast cancer when a woman experiences her first period at a younger age. And "for each year that age of menarche was delayed, the risk of premenopausal breast cancer was reduced by 9 percent, and risk of postmenopausal breast cancer was reduced by 4 percent."

Early breast development also opens the door to reproductive tract cancers, says Herman-Giddens, since "if you're starting to develop breasts, your body is making estrogen." Estrogen, especially when combined with stress hormones, is a known cancer-causing agent. Having had an earlier start to puberty, an early-maturing girl produces more estrogen over the years and so elevates her lifetime risk of reproductive cancers.

Able to Conceive in Kindergarten

There is a medical solution for patients who, like 6-year-old Rebecca, are diagnosed with precocious puberty. Hormone treatments can essentially halt the process of sexual maturation. Then, at an appropriate age, the drugs are withdrawn and puberty plays out.

Some girls diagnosed with precocious puberty have no choice but to medicate in order to prevent serious bone and growth problems. Rebecca fell into this category. While precocious children may stand half a foot taller than their peers in kindergarten, these same children also tend to stop growing at a young age and so never reach their predicted adult heights. Often, they fail to reach five feet tall.

As the average age of the onset of puberty continues to rapidly decrease, the line between endocrine disorder and so-

called normal development has begun to blur. “A lot of girls who we are labeling as premature puberty now are probably normal, healthy girls who are at the lower end of the new normal,” says Dr. Paul Kaplowitz of Children's National Medical Center. Which makes it pretty difficult for parents to know whether they should be medicating their young daughters.

In these edge cases, the decision to undergo hormone therapy is a matter of balancing potential benefits and harms. According to Dr. Alan Christianson, author of *The Adrenal Reset Diet*, the medications themselves may have both short-term side effects, such as headaches, hot flashes and vaginal bleeding, and possible lasting complications, such as thyroid gland disorders.

Another barrier to treatment is the expense: The drugs cost a minimum of \$15,000 a year, excluding lab costs. In Ellen's case, most of this was covered by insurance, but she still ended up having to pay a few thousand dollars a year.

Which is why many parents decide there's nothing more to do for an early-maturing daughter other than guiding her, the best they can, through the vulnerable years. That, though, is often a difficult and solitary road to walk. As Ellen says, “Precocious puberty is not like allergies or something where you can just find other mothers on the playground or at the school going through the same thing with their kids.”

But many other parents do choose medication. Having seen very young girls struggle with their periods, Kaplowitz says he's “OK” with treating those early-maturing girls who “are likely to start their period well before age 10.” More than a few girls today begin breast development shortly after turning 8 and then continue growing at a rapid pace.

Outward manifestations of maturation are one thing. Usually, though, it's not height problems or breast development that propel parents to opt for medical treatment. “In my experience, it is largely because parents

are worried about whether their girls can handle periods at an early age,” says Kaplowitz.

In the words of one mother in a chat room, the possibility that her daughter “could menstruate at any time (she was already having discharge by about 3 or 4) trumped the height factor.... The mere possibility of her being able to conceive in kindergarten was enough for me to decide to treat her.”



Hulton Archive/Getty

CHARLES BRACKETT'S TALES OF A 'FOOLISH' TINSELTOWN

THE DIARIES OF CHARLES BRACKETT, WHO CO-WROTE SOME OF BILLY WILDER'S BEST FILMS, PROVIDE A RINGSIDE SEAT TO THE OLD HOLLYWOOD CIRCUS.

The story goes that Alan Ladd, a huge star in 1946, complained to the producer of a war picture that was about to start shooting: “Just for a change, can I have a finished script before I start? I’m tired of having 30 or 40 pages thrust at me and being told I’ll get the rest.” When assured that he

would have what he asked for, Ladd thanked him and added, “An actor likes to know what wardrobe he’s got to have.”

The annals of Hollywood are filled with such gags told at the actor’s expense—and they’re usually told by writers, since they write everything and often get the last laugh (if not the money and prestige). “It’s the Pictures That Got Small”: Charles Brackett on Billy Wilder and Hollywood’s Golden Age (Columbia University Press) is filled with such jokes and characterizations. Brackett, a producer and screenwriter best known for his collaborations with Wilder (*The Lost Weekend*, *Sunset Boulevard*) used his diaries (1932 to 1949) to cast a light on the life of a lowly movie scribe (albeit one of the most successful of his time), while catching the scenery around him in all of its sparkle and shadow.

“His work in recording the day-to-day working life of a Hollywood studio is comparable to that of Samuel Pepys in the seventeenth-century documenting a crucial period—the Restoration—in British history,” writes editor Anthony Slide in his introduction. “Like Brackett, Pepys had wide-ranging interests, with his diaries mingling the personal with the impersonal.” So we get the rumblings of the age off-screen (the Depression, the buildup to America’s involvement in World War II, the Hollywood blacklist) and the author’s impressions of stars such as Ginger Rogers (“She hasn’t a very good brain but insists on using it”) and Charlie Chaplin (“as repellent a human being as I’ve ever been in the room with”) and literary figures slumming for money like F. Scott Fitzgerald (“He seemed burned-out, colorless, amazing when one remembers the blaze of his youth”) and Aldous Huxley (“Frankly, I detest this writer, whose work I worship. ...”). Starting with his arrival from New York, where he was *The New Yorker*’s first drama critic and a novelist of some renown and had a seat at the Algonquin Round Table, Brackett’s diaries read like a funnier, better-paced version of *Barton Fink*.

But he saved his best stuff for his relationship with Wilder. Life magazine called them, “The Happiest Couple in Hollywood,” and their union yielded 12 movies (and many more, unproduced scripts) but like many such partnerships, it wasn’t easy. “The comparison of Brackett and Wilder to husband-and-wife writing teams is not a wild one,” writes Slide, “for in many ways the two men functioned as husband and wife—agreeing and disagreeing in their relationship as much as would any married couple.” And when they finally parted company, after the struggle to make Sunset Boulevard, Wilder said “something had worn out and the spark was missing. Besides, it was becoming like a bad marriage.”

The two couldn’t have been more different. Wilder, an Austrian-born Jew who fled Germany during the rise of Hitler, was politically liberal and a tireless womanizer. Brackett’s father was a New York state senator and his family traced its roots back to the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He was a Republican WASP, casually anti-Semitic in his jottings, unable to write about his wife’s alcoholism and (perhaps) a closeted homosexual. He despised the faux proletariat in tinseltown, sniffing of Elia Kazan, when he won a best director Oscar (for *Gentleman’s Agreement*) in 1948, “he hadn’t the grace to wear a dinner coat. Social protest, I presume.” And when Brackett won an Academy Award in 1946 for co-writing *The Lost Weekend*, he records “a compliment from [gossip columnist] Hedda [Hopper] which went right down to the dark springs of snobbism and pleased me mightily, something to the effect that ‘it’s so wonderful you should have overcome the advantages of gentle birth and come to this.... I looked at all the other people on the stage and there wasn’t another top drawer person among them, male or female.’”

Brackett and Wilder were contract writers at Paramount in 1936 when they were thrust together to work on an Ernst Lubitsch comedy, *Bluebeard’s Eighth Wife*. Their styles

were different but ultimately complementary. “Brackett wrote repartee,” wrote Maurice Zolotow in *Billy Wilder in Hollywood*. “He hated story conferences. He hated talking out imaginary scenes with directors and producers. Wilder loved those moments. The burden of story conference strategy fell upon his glib tongue.”



Screenwriting team of director Billy Wilder and producer Charles Brackett work in their office at Paramount in 1944. Credit: Peter Stackpole/Life Magazine/
The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty

Lubitsch was considered the master of the lost art of the screwball comedy, and *Bluebeard* belonged in an equally extinct subgenre Zolotow labeled “the UFF, or Unfinished Fuck” picture in which the heroine (Claudette Colbert), “a compulsive virgin,” frustrates the amorous hero (Gary Cooper)—even after they are married. To convey such a story under the strict code of the Motion Pictures Association of America of the time, when even married couples slept in separate beds on screen and no one kissed with their mouths open, was the first challenge the two faced and the results were deemed such a success that soon everyone wanted that Brackett-Wilder touch.

Their writing styles, too, were completely divergent. “He is a hard, conscientious worker, without a very sensitive ear for dialogue, but a beautiful constructionist,” Brackett writes of his partner in September 1936. “He’s extremely stubborn, which makes for trying work sessions, but they’re stimulating.” By November he has learned of working with his “temperamental partner.... The thing to do was suggest an idea, have it torn apart and despised. In a few days it would be apt to turn up, slightly changed, as Wilder’s idea. Once I got adjusted to that way of working, our lives were simpler.”

Soon the pair were known for doing the impossible, as they collaborated with Lubitsch again on *Ninotchka* (1939), the story of a humorless Soviet apparatchik (Greta Garbo) who falls in love with a Western playboy (Melvyn Douglas) in Paris. In Hollywood at the time, you were called a “social fascist” or a “Red baiter... if you didn’t admire Joseph Stalin or ridiculed the USSR,” writes Zolotow. This was before Stalin’s pact with Hitler, though rumors of the show trials and mass executions taking place in Russia were already the best way to start an argument among show people. How, then, make Garbo (somebody not known for comedy) a sympathetically funny figure—though not a figure of fun?

It was Wilder's idea to take the tale to Moscow, where they could depict in semi-realistic fashion the living conditions of Soviet citizens at the time. Ninotchka shares an apartment with a cellist and a streetcar conductor; the love letter she gets from Douglas has been completely redacted; and when three friends come to have dinner with her, each brings his own egg. The contrast between her life there and the Champagne and caviar dream of Paris spoke volumes.

Despite their skill for comedy, Brackett and Wilder wanted to push themselves. It was Wilder's idea to translate Charles Jackson's 1944 novel about an alcoholic writer in Manhattan to the screen, a subject for which Brackett initially showed little enthusiasm. "Nowhere in the diaries is the word alcoholism used to describe [his wife's] condition, nor does he attempt to detail her depression," writes Brackett's grandson, Jim Moore in his foreword. "At most, he will mention that she has gone back East, where a Western Massachusetts clinic took her in for care."

And it didn't stop there: One of Brackett's daughters became an alcoholic, and married one herself. She died after falling down the stairs, while he died in a fire after he'd passed out. And Wilder, who, like his partner was not much of a drinker, was mystified by the behavior of one of his famous collaborators, Raymond Chandler, who worked with him on *Double Indemnity* (1944). "[One] day he was living in reality and the next he would fall into a spell of morbid gloom and become incomprehensible to Wilder," wrote Zolotow. "Billy Wilder made *The Lost Weekend* to explain Raymond Chandler to himself."

Much has been written about the making of the film (**Blake Bailey wrote an entire book** about Jackson, a somewhat pathetic figure whom Brackett delights in tormenting), and Brackett confines his notes less to the difficulties of capturing such grim material and more to the pressure outside forces, from AA to whiskey distilleries, tried to bring to bear on Paramount—and the inevitable

inaneities of the censors after it was made. “There was a great flurry from the Censorship Department about Jane Wyman’s wearing a white sweater which they claimed was too revelatory,” wrote Brackett on December 26, 1944. “One of the censors said it looked as though Wyman was trying to cure [Ray Milland] off the bottle by the nipple.”

Whatever its subliminal messages, *Lost Weekend* swept the Oscars the next year, winning awards for the writers, Milland—and Wilder, for the first time, as director. Much like the alcoholic foreswearing drink, Brackett repeats (and repeats) that he will never work with Wilder again (“After all, an Oscar one night a year is agreeable, but is it worth looking at that face and listening to that ego all the other days in the calendar?”)—only to be brought back together. Though Wilder had other writing partners after he and Brackett broke up (most notably I.A.L. Diamond, who co-wrote *Some Like It Hot* and *The Apartment*), the tension of their collaboration was unique and *Sunset Boulevard* was their fitting finale.

The original idea was Brackett’s. “We’re pretty well set on the raddled old picture star who is keeping a young man, probably a writer,” he notes in August 1948. He envisioned a comedy but Wilder was pulling the story in a darker direction. “As writers—which was what they still considered themselves—Brackett and Wilder had reached the pinnacle of success,” writes Zolotow. “They were at the \$5,000-a-week salary level, individually, and that was the highest scale in 1948.”

But the war, and the Communist witch hunts that followed, made the already jaded Wilder even more cynical, success or no. Brackett’s wife, Elizabeth, had died a year before and the entry for June 7, 1947 is one of the most heartfelt in the book: “I held my dear girl’s hand and, very quietly, more quietly than drifting to sleep, the breathing stopped and I was left with a sharp sense of aloneness, of realization of how I’d depended on that wise, ill woman,

how she'd meant home and refuge from the foolishness of this foolish town.... ”

Despite his loss, Brackett still wanted to make people laugh and the joke of having a dead writer tell the sordid tale of his doomed affair with a washed-up siren was the kind that appealed to both him and Wilder. Casting was a bitch—the old film stars they approached, including Mae West and Mary Pickford, resented the implication that they were has-beens and Montgomery Clift, the hot actor of the moment, bagged on them at the last moment. “I could swear someone he loves has said to him, ‘You mustn’t play that dreadful part,’” Brackett wrote in his diary—and indeed, the legendarily gay Clift “had been for some years in the grip of a romantic obsession with a woman about 30 years older than he was—Libby Holman, the famous torch singer of the 1920s,” according to Zolotow. “Libby Holman had threatened to kill herself if Montgomery played such a role in this movie.”

Which was how, with the accidental luck of many of Hollywood’s great films, they ended up casting William Holden and Gloria Swanson (“Sic transit Gloria Swanson,” was the one-line review of the film offered by one wag). Little else was left to chance, from the selection of the house in which she hides (actually at Wilshire and Irving, a few miles south of Sunset Boulevard) to the close-up Brackett insisted upon when Swanson uttered her most famous line: “I am big—it’s the pictures that got small.”

Brackett was equally adamant about casting the great silent film director Erich von Stroheim in the role of Swanson’s chauffeur. Von Stroheim added humor of his own when a makeup man approached him for a scene in which he sets up the screen on which Norma Desmond watches her old films.

“Are you going to make up my ass?” von Stroheim asked him. “Because that’s all that’s being photographed.”



Marc Fiorito/Gamma Nine Photography

THE FOODIE'S OSCARS

AT SAN FRANCISCO'S GOOD FOOD AWARDS, CULINARY ARTISANS TASTE THE MANGO KETCHUP.

“Mississippi doesn’t have a huge specialty-coffee business,” says Paul Bonds of Bean Fruit Coffee Company in Jackson, Mississippi. “When I first started my booth at a local farmers market, this guy came by who was about as Mississippi as they come.” For the benefit of the crowd assembled at San Francisco’s Palace of Fine Arts Theater for the fifth annual Good Food Awards, he adds a bit of local color: “He had on work boots—the kind you work in, not for style.”

Bonds, who was here receiving an award—a pendant in the shape of a coffee mug—for his Ethiopia Yergecheffe Chele’lektu, recalls how he explained the varietals and provenance of the beans he was selling that day. There was the Ennaria, also from Ethiopia, with its honey, orange and lime juice notes, and the Finca los Cauchos from Colombia, tasting of cinnamon and dried apple. But after a minute, the good old boy’d had enough.

“Hell,” he said. “I just wanted regular coffee.”

Mississippi may be a bit of an outlier here, at what has been dubbed the Oscars of the food movement (and Bonds himself is somewhat of an anomaly, being one of the few people of color onstage tonight). But Sarah Weiner, the woman behind the awards and the executive director of Seedling Projects (“a ‘do tank’ for the food movement”), says they always meant to be inclusive. “As of last year, we started having entries from all 50 states,” says Weiner, 34.

Going from Brooklyn to Northern California, as I have in the last year, one could be forgiven for thinking that all the best local, sustainable, innovative food is produced in those two locales. (And I am not too surprised when Sabrina Meinhardt of Fort Greene’s Greene Grape Provisions, my former locale in New York, introduces Bonds—and reveals that she got her start at SF’s Bi-Rite Market, sort of a Bauhaus of food movement grocers.) Tonight there are awards given in 11 categories (beer, charcuterie, cheese, chocolate, coffee, confections, honey, oils, pickles, preserves and spirits) from points as remote as Vermont (Eden Ice Cider’s Heirloom Blend) and Florida (Royal Gourmet Company’s Mango Marmalade) and as near as here. SF’s Market Hall Food, for instance, won for its Chicken Liver Mousse (the incredibly creamy concoction is available for tasting, along with many other dishes displayed on long tables in the theater lobby after the awards), and the city’s Guittard Chocolate Company is represented by its Collection Etienne 45% Cacao.

Gary Guittard takes his moment at the mic to lecture the assembled on the history of chocolate-making in Europe, beginning with Coenraad Johannes van Houten's cocoa press in the Netherlands. He adds a special shout-out to John Scharffenberger, the Northern California sparkling-wine maker who brought artisanal French-style chocolate to the U.S.: "It certainly woke me up!" says Guittard, and while I worry for a second that I've fallen asleep in study hall, it seems that most of the assembled are paying close attention. It's an interesting mix of hipsters, entrepreneurs and small farmers, who've come for their moment of glory and to meet their fellow foodies.

At times there are dozens of people onstage, each wave of winners having their awards hung around their necks like Olympic athletes by the good-food godmothers, and judges, Alice Waters, Ruth Reichl and Nell Newman (of Newman's Own). Most started their business out of passion. "As a second-grader, I dreamed of being a beekeeper," says Emily Brown of Arizona's AZ Queen Bee, who won for its Pure Raw Honeycomb. (She adds later, "I didn't know you shouldn't work with bees when it's raining"—a lesson she learned after being stung 12 times.)

Getting food makers together to compare notes was part of Weiner's mission. After working for Carlo Petrini's Slow Food organization in Italy, she took a job as Waters's assistant and helped the Chez Panisse founder raise the first \$400,000 for Slow Food Nation, a sustainable-food event that attracted over 50,000 people to San Francisco in 2008. It was there that Weiner heard a farmer say, "As a preserve maker, I very rarely talk to the cheese people or the coffee people or the chocolate people, and this gave us an excuse to work together and realize how many of the challenges we face are common."

A lot of this is about the business of being a small food maker and purveyor in a world where the odds favor the big guys. Wendy Mitchell of Avalanche Cheese in Colorado,

after reflecting on the path that led her to raising goats and hiring and firing farm managers (“and sharing an office with a guy who wants to listen to the Mets all day instead of Beck”), gets the biggest laugh of the night when she quotes Mike Tyson: “Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.”

In her closing remarks, Weiner (whom the San Francisco Chronicle dubbed a “hipster pixie,” whatever that is) salutes the assembled food-crafters. “Ignoring business as usual, you build companies that feel like families, transform cities into tight-knit communities and support every social cause with a keg of beer or a wheel of cheese,” she says. “You pay more than fair trade prices to people living thousands of miles away and are the No. 1 customers of farmers down the street. Your goats have names, and you call your bees ‘ladies.’”

Growing up in St. Louis, Weiner always hated milk “until I was 16, summer backpacking through Europe, and drank fresh milk in Switzerland.” Most foodies have a moment like this—for Waters it was an epiphany involving apricot jam on a baguette in France—but it’s always about the flavor, not the locale.

“One of the most common criticisms of the food movement is that it’s elitist because it’s expensive, but it doesn’t have to be,” Weiner tells me later. “I always say, ‘Buy less, buy better.’ With the same budget you can eat well, and don’t have seven jars of jam open in your fridge and then five of them go bad before they’re gone.”

But how did she see inside my refrigerator?



Mongrel Media

FOLLOW THE BLEEDER

WRITER-DIRECTOR DAVID ROBERT MITCHELL TAKES THE SEX-IS-SCARY TROPE OF HORROR FILMS AND MAKES A MONSTER AS UNSTOPPABLE AS AN STD.

Back in the '80s there was an urban legend of a man/woman who picks up a willing sex partner at a bar/club and takes him/her back to an apartment/hotel. They do the deed, and in the morning the pickup wakes to discover the easy lover has vanished. In the bathroom our protagonist discovers a message written in lipstick/shaving cream/blood on the mirror: "WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF AIDS."

That apocryphal tale tapped into the fears of anyone who came of age during the AIDS plague years. It's this vein that writer-director David Robert Mitchell drains with *It Follows*, the young filmmaker's second feature. An indie horror film shot over 28 days in Mitchell's hometown of Detroit, *It Follows* tells the story of Jay (Maika Monroe), a 19-year-old girl who sleeps with a boy she likes but awakens to discover that she's contracted a sexually transmitted monster—one that will continue to slowly stalk her with the aim of brutally rearranging her body parts. Unless, of course, she has sex with someone else and passes the monster to him. But if it happens to catch and kill her next sexual partner, it comes back for her, and so on. The film played to strong reviews at the Cannes and Toronto film festivals, and it will have midnight screenings at the *Sundance Film Festival* before a March 27 theatrical release.

"The basic idea of being followed by something that is slow but never stops is from a nightmare I had when I was a kid," says Mitchell. "I would see someone in the distance, and they would just be walking very slowly towards me, and I would turn to the people around me and point them out, and they wouldn't know what I was talking about. I immediately knew that this was a monster, something that was going to hurt me. And I would run away from it and wait, and then eventually it would come around the corner. ... I could always get away from it, but what was horrible about it was that it just never stopped. It was always coming for me."

The unrelenting pursuer—think the Terminator, or Michael Myers or Pepe Le Pew—is the creepiest thing about *It Follows*. Mitchell wisely avoids the torture-porn and gore commonplace in modern horror and instead creates a dreamlike setting that references both John Carpenter and David Lynch, with a shifting, synthetic score that moves between melodic passages and controlled noise.

The suburban Detroit setting is also not something we're used to seeing on film, lending the movie an air of unfamiliarity. It's hard to put your finger on many of Mitchell's locations—even the decade. "There are references to things in the '70s and '80s. We were going for an outside-of-time feel to take it outside of our reality just enough." One character reads Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot* on an e-reader that looks like a birth control pillbox. "I just took a '60s shell compact and we just turned it into a cellphone," says Mitchell. "It physically looks like something from the '60s, but it has a modern element to it. It's just a little marker to show that this isn't quite our world."

This is where Mitchell's film differs from most other horror movies: If you took a few scenes out, it could in fact look like a magical coming of (sexual) age drama, which in a sense it is. Though Mitchell stopped having the stalking dream when he was young, when it took form as a film idea, the sexual element was added.

The sex monster, it should be noted, must obey some basic physical rules. It can't move through walls like a ghost, though it can break windows and climb through. And while it's invisible to anyone it isn't connected to, it can appear as anyone—a relative, schoolteacher, a weird naked man on a roof—to the person it's hunting. While it's inspired by zombies and pod people—things that don't necessarily race toward you but are still terrifying—it's one of the most original monsters of late, even if it comes as a grandmother in a nightgown walking toward you. "That's one of those fun things about a horror film," says Mitchell. "There are rules, but they have to be created by the people within the world, and those people have their own limitations. Like the things that Hugh [the one-night stand] tells Jay, that's his interpretation of what he figured out. The info comes from a highly suspect person."



Maika Monroe stars in "It Follows." Credit: Mongrel Media

Which made me wonder how frequently people intentionally deceive their sexual partners about their STD status. “As a general rule, we would say people ought to be honest and forthcoming with any potential sexual partners that they have a sexually transmitted disease,” says Leslie Kantor, vice president of education for Planned Parenthood. “There are a couple of exceptions to that. Unfortunately, sometimes people feel that they’re in a situation where there may be violence or some kind of abuse, and in that case, of course, then people should not disclose, because they could put themselves at risk.”

Maybe Hugh’s not such a bad guy after all; in a harrowing sequence, he straps Jay to a wheelchair in order to give her pointers on how to avoid the violence that’s about to come her way.

After their encounter, Jay’s reaction to her newfound STD status kicks off a twist on the “final girl” horror trope. In one of the most visual representations of innocence lost, Jay takes to a swing set in a wide-open field, where she can survey the distance for anyone walking toward her.

“Some people maybe read the film as trying to scare people away from sex and trying to make some sort of moral statement, but it’s not that for me,” says Mitchell. “To me, Jay is strong, and she’s done nothing wrong. She slept with

someone that she liked, and that's OK, and all these things that come from that are not punishment for sin. It's more about the reality of the world."

As for whether or not people believe that they can pass on an STD to someone else to cure themselves of it, it's not a commonly held notion here in America, but Kantor says the idea is not completely unheard-of. "There is some mythology in some areas of the world that having sex with a virgin will somehow cure HIV. There's some pretty scary implications from there, with people trying to have sex with younger teens and things like that."

"And you've never heard of any type of sexually transmitted monster?" I asked her.

"I have not."

And yet, monstrously terrible things can happen through sex. The fear that you might have a sexually transmitted disease looms in the same mental space in which a monster would loom. I acquired an STD in my freshman year of college, and it was one of the most horrifying experiences of my life. I never wanted to have sex with anyone again. For an 18-year-old boy, that's saying a lot.

"Even when I was a teenager thinking about it, I thought it could be really fun if it was something that could be shared in some way, almost like a game of tag," says Mitchell.

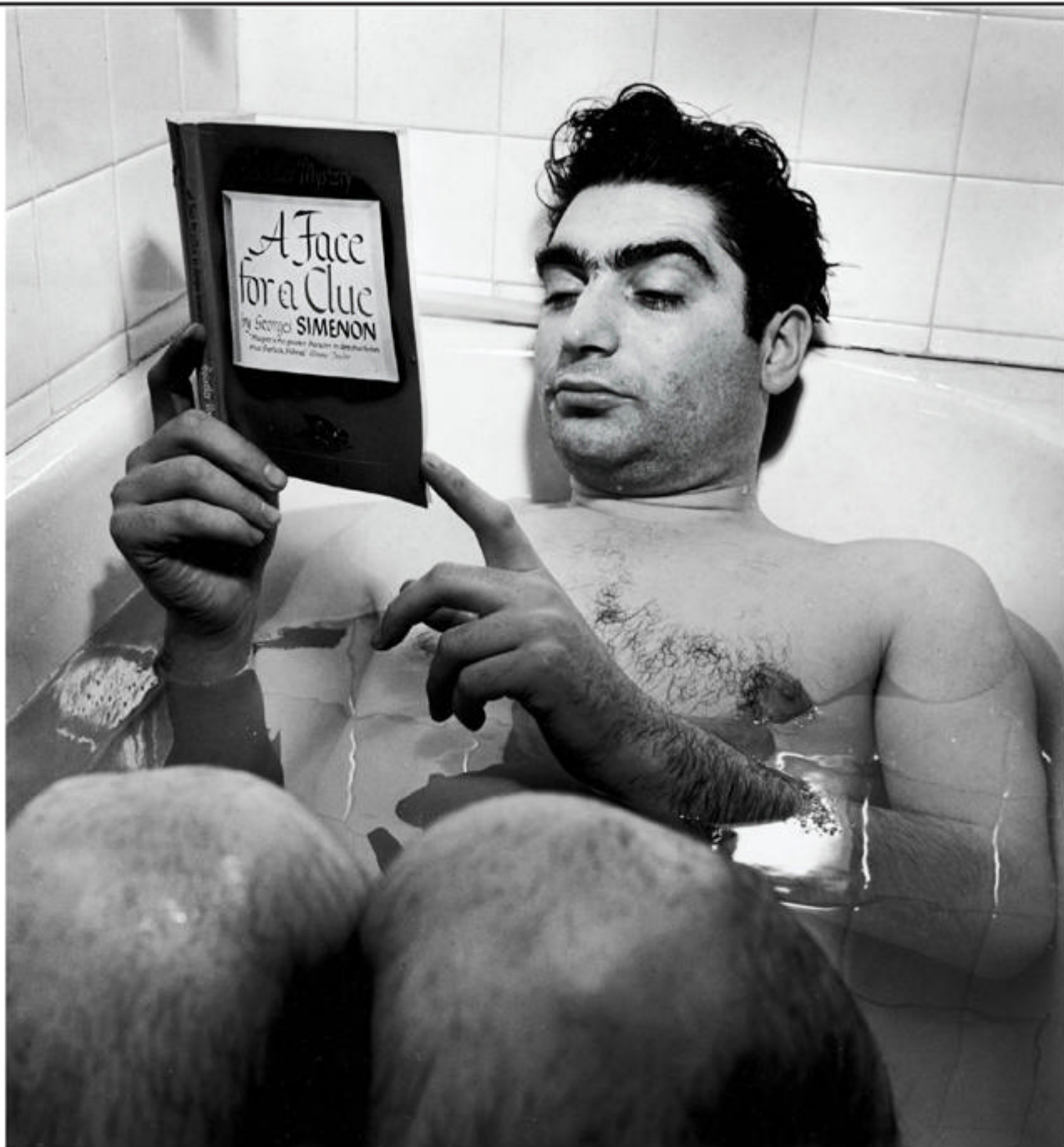
"And then I thought that sex connects people physically and emotionally. And I sort of like the way that people have physical and emotional connections to people that they have slept with, and those things stay with us."

It Follows is really about mortality and morality, because you can escape the monster by giving It to someone else (at least temporarily). This would cause all kinds of interpersonal problems with real-world STDs. If I could have been free of my own affliction by simply bedding someone else, would I have? I asked Kantor about the infected-stranger urban legend.

“Most people are very responsible these days when it comes to their sexual lives and taking measures to prevent STDs,” she says. “As an example, 80 percent of young men use a condom now the first time they have sex. That’s really become a norm. This is not happening in a widespread way. There are a lot of STDs out there, but most of them are out there not because people are trying to give them to someone else but because they don’t know they have them.

“It’s true that people have sex for a lot of different reasons,” Kantor continues. “While it sounds like a simple point, it’s actually a pretty profound point. It runs the gamut, from wanting to connect deeply with someone to raging hormones.”

Which, of course, brings us back to Dostoyevsky. “We aren’t here forever,” says Mitchell, speaking of the reference to the great Russian novelist. “And one of the ways that we can keep our fear of death at bay is through sex and through love. These are ways in which we can find a way to be OK with the fact that our lives are limited. And it’s something that these characters are maybe just starting to become aware of, that it’s something we all live with.”



Myron Davis/The LIFE Images Collection/Getty

HACKING THE NOVEL

LATELY, THE NOVEL HAS STARTED TO TILT TOWARD OBLIVION. IS A RESTORATION POSSIBLE?

The house where the novel lives today had its foundation laid about 1,000 years ago by Lady Murasaki, with a little help from Homer and the ancient Babylonian scribes who punched The Epic of Gilgamesh into clay tablets. Henry Fielding helped with the walls, Cervantes added the windows, warped glass and all. The great 19th century Russians raised the sturdy roof beams. Dickens and Austen added a fireplace and drawing room. Proust, Joyce and

Woolf built a somewhat severe modernist wing. Pynchon plopped down some prurient lawn gnomes.

But no house stands forever, and, lately, the novel has started to tilt toward oblivion. That's largely because it has been supplanted as the primary means of telling stories. For pure narrative whiz-bang, it's hard for the page to compete with the screen. All the way back in the cultural prehistory that was 1996, [Jonathan Franzen worried in a landmark Harper's essay](#) that "we are truly up against what truly seems like the obsolescence of serious art in general." And that was before *The Sopranos*, before *Grand Theft Auto*, before Twitter and Facebook and even Friendster. Franzen wrote on paper, for people who read on paper, for whom reading was still the primary gateway to unreal realities. Little did they know. Little do any of us, ever.

The death of the novel has been much discussed, like the plight of a once grand mansion that has since become an eyesore. To talk about the end of fiction, to churn out think pieces about its certain demise, is to evince a cool knowledge of impending disaster, to meet cultural disaster with sangfroid. Did another bookstore just close? Did you read the latest report on Americans' reading habits? To the laptops!

But maybe not yet. Perhaps a restoration is possible, if not exactly to the form of those resplendent *Don Quixote* days, when one could look out over the hills and see no other mansions (now, the gaudy Netflix palace crowds out the views). Reading is a basic human activity: It predates Jeff Bezos, as I understand it, and will persist as long as nerves from the retina lead to the brain. Telling stories is just as central to the human enterprise: stories not just of what happened yesterday but what could have happened, and what happened 1,000 yesterdays ago, and what might happen 10,000 days from now. The novel has served this purpose well, but, facing extinction, it might need a transformation to survive; what digital natives call a hack.

Precisely such a hack was loudly and convincingly suggested four years ago by David Shields in *Reality Hunger: A Manifesto*. An aphoristic, weird work of literary criticism, *Reality Hunger* argues that to survive, the novel must become less like itself, to just stop with the whole plot-character-theme business. *Homeland* can do that better anyway, so why even bother trying to keep up, especially without Claire Danes on your side? If you have something to say, say it plainly, without all the juvenile disguises of the novel.

The novel, Shields says, is just a form and “[forms] serve the culture; when they die, they die for a good reason: They’re no longer embodying what it’s like to be alive.” Shields suggests that creative nonfiction—the essay as an art form, which he calls the lyrical essay—is a solution that retains the novel’s artistry while discarding its artifice. “We like nonfiction because we live in fictitious times.” Along with the lyrical essay, the memoir rides high in *Reality Hunger*: storytelling as self-examination, à la Montaigne or Joan Didion, true life instead of fake life.

Wait a minute, you’re surely thinking, a novel that isn’t telling a fictional story isn’t a novel. No, I suppose it isn’t. Shields is advocating for some hybrid, a bricolage of true stuff and made-up stuff and thought and observation and rumination and conjecture. He cites portions of both *Moby-Dick* and *Hamlet* as showcasing this very quality, forgoing the devices of the novel and simply preaching truth to the reader. But you know the notion of plot that your ninth-grade English teacher taught you, the one that Aristotle first suggested in the *Poetics*? That, says Shields, is about as outdated as your first Kindle, the one with the panoply of buttons beneath the screen.

Lately, Shields’s ideas about the novel seem to have been borne out by the reading public. Probably the biggest literary surprise of the past three years has been Karl Ove Knausgaard’s *My Struggle*, a massive six-volume

autobiography disguised (but only barely) as a novel. To read Knausgaard for plot is to watch Bergman for the fart jokes, and yet his Shieldsian novels have enjoyed immense popularity, probably because they satisfy a need deeper than what-happens-next-to-the-two-lovers-stranded-in-a-hurricane or I-hope-he-finds-the-bomb-before-it-levels-Baltimore. [Reviewing the third volume of My Struggle in The New York Times earlier this year, the American novelist Rivka Galchen wrote](#), “What at first appears to be the problem of how we as readers have patience for so much information reveals itself, upon inspection, as the problem of how it is that, with so little information, we feel we have witnessed an entire life.”

The essay, too, had a good year, with Leslie Jamison’s [The Empathy Exams](#) and Eula Biss’s [On Immunity: An Inoculation](#) two of the most widely praised collections. These are not the sorts of “essays” you had to read in American History 403: The Socio-Poetics of the Louisiana Purchase, nor of the sort you’d encounter in Theoretical Cellular Physics Monthly. These essays are personal, inquisitive, alive, written by young women clearly intent on more than just providing entertainment. For cheap thrills, you can just watch *Mad Men*.

[Reviewing the essays of Charles D’Ambrosio in The L Magazine](#), a critic perceptively notes that “there’s a reason that essays are having a moment.... [Our] cultural discourse veers from one stridently argued conclusion to the next, an impoverished stream of takes and summations that leaves no room for ambivalence or nuance. The essay is the one forum in which we can find the contradictions, bewilderment, and uncertainty that are the dark matter of daily life.”

The novel still stands, sure enough, but it stands uneasily, a kitschy McMansion whose vocabulary is steadfastly outdated, a form that can only look backward. I can’t think of a single full-length novel published in 2014 that did anything new. Most of the ones I read rehashed the same

realistic formula that has held at least since Raskolnikov wandered through St. Petersburg's dingy courtyards.

So is Shields right? Is Knausgaard our savior? Are essays the new novels? Are novels going the way of illuminated manuscripts? Impossible questions, all. But this is a good time to remember Ezra Pound's ferocious, uncompromising dictum: Make it new.



Peter Stackpole/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty/HBO

WHY HITCHCOCK'S FILM ON THE HOLOCAUST WAS NEVER SHOWN

**THE MOST IMPORTANT MOVIE ALFRED HITCHCOCK
EVER WORKED ON DIDN'T MAKE IT TO THE SCREEN.**

Two women drag an emaciated female corpse along the ground, its head bouncing on the dirt. When they reach a large pit, they stop, give the naked body a quick tug backward to pick up momentum, then hurl it into the hole.

The corpse, which looks like a skeleton covered in a thin film of skin, flops onto a mound of decomposing bodies.

The scene, shot at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp at the end of World War II, might never have been seen by the public had a decommissioned film, boasting Alfred Hitchcock as a supervising director and British film pioneer Sidney Bernstein as producer, not been resurrected. Authorized in the spring of 1945 by the Allied forces, German Concentration Camps Factual Survey captured the monstrous realities found during the liberation of Nazi death camps, including Bergen-Belsen, Dachau and Auschwitz.

Yet by August of that year, the film was shelved by British authorities. Everything—reels of footage, the script, the cameramen's notes—was boxed up and buried in the archives of the Imperial War Museums (IWM) in London. A new HBO documentary, [Night Will Fall](#) (January 26), directed by André Singer and narrated by Helena Bonham Carter and Jasper Britton, tells the story of how, 70 years later, this lost film came back to life.

In the spring of 1945, British, American and Soviet troops were headed toward Berlin in the final days of the war. Along with them were soldiers who'd been trained as cameramen—young, brawny men with cigarettes hanging out of their mouths and large, boxy cameras hoisted up on their shoulders, who arrived at concentration camps during their liberation to record the harrowing aftermath of the atrocities there.

It took a while for details about the concentration camps to get out. On April 19, 1945, BBC Radio aired a controversial report by Richard Dimbleby about his experience at Bergen-Belsen, in northern Germany. Initially, the BBC refused to air the report; the broadcaster simply couldn't believe Dimbleby hadn't embellished the details. "I found myself in the world of a nightmare," he said. "Dead bodies, some of them in decay, lay strewn about the road and along the rutted tracks. On each side of the road were

brown wooden huts. There were faces at the windows. The bony, emaciated faces of starving women too weak to come outside, propping themselves against the glass to see the daylight before they died. And they were dying, every hour and every minute.”

The report was so stunning that, a couple of days later, Bernstein, then a leading film producer and head of film for Britain’s psychological war department, made his way to the camp. What he found there inspired his next endeavor: a full-length documentary that would portray the Nazis’ horrific crimes so vividly it would be impossible to deny they ever took place.

‘The Most Appalling Hell Possible’

After the American and British governments approved his film, Bernstein handpicked a powerhouse team, including editor Stewart McAllistar, writers Richard Crossman and Colin Willis, and a famous movie director, Alfred Hitchcock. They had just three months to complete the documentary from reels and reels of footage captured by those British, American and Russian cameramen.

Night Will Fall shows many of these scenes, and they are rife with unspeakable details: Dead bodies are strewn across plots of land, some in heaps and others lined up like a carpet of human carcasses. When the camera zooms in, we see limbs, as thin as bones, tangled together like pretzels. Skulls cracked open by puncture wounds. Gaunt, hollow eyes and gaping mouths frozen in silent screams. Shoulders, thighs and legs marked by burns, cuts and filth.

We see soldiers slinging the dead over their shoulders as they hurl them into dump trucks. We watch the twins who survived Dr. Josef Mengele’s grotesque human experiments at Auschwitz walk through a narrow corridor of barbed wire. And we look into the eyes of the dead and dying at Dachau, which John Krish, an editor on the film, said “was like looking into the most appalling hell possible.” All the

while, German locals stood on the sidelines, bearing witness to a genocide they claimed they didn't know about.

The images will make you want to look away, but don't. As Raye Farr, a director at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum from 1995 to 2003, says in the documentary, "The films shot at Bergen-Belsen by the British cameramen reveal every level of humanity to a much greater extent than any other of the film evidence."

Helping us make sense of this heart- and gut-wrenching footage are interviews with concentration camp survivors, the soldiers who saved them and the cameramen who were there to record the slaughter.

"You couldn't tell if they were dead or alive," Benjamin Ferencz, a sergeant with the U.S. Third Army, recalls in the documentary. "You'd step over a body and it would suddenly wave at you, raise a hand. Total chaos. Dysentery, typhoid, all kinds of diseases in the camp. Putrid. The smell of the camps, the crematorium was still going, the dead bodies piled up like cordwood in front of the crematorium. It's hard to imagine for a normal human mind. I had peered into hell and that's—" Ferencz, who later served as chief prosecutor during the Nuremberg Trials, tries to stop himself from crying. "It's not something you quickly forget."

German Concentration Camps Factual Survey is Hitchcock's only known documentary feature. Though his tenure on the film lasted just one month, he made lasting contributions, helping to outline the story and emphasizing the importance of showing just how close the concentration camps were to picturesque villages where German civilians lived during the war. He wanted the film to be as believable and irrefutable as possible to ensure that the massacre of 11 million people, including 6 million Jews, would never be forgotten.

In the summer of 1945, plans for German Concentration Camps Factual Survey began to unravel. The American government grew impatient with Bernstein's slow,

meticulous process and pulled its footage, hiring its own director, Billy Wilder, to create a shorter film. Wilder's *Death Mills* premiered in Würzburg following an operetta with Lillian Harvey. Of the 500-odd people in the audience at the beginning of the screening, less than 100 were in their seats at the end.

Bernstein's work had also become a political headache for American and British officials. The consensus was that the film was no longer necessary. "Policy at the moment in Germany is entirely in the direction of encouraging, stimulating and interesting the Germans out of their apathy, and there are people around the Commander-in-Chief who will say 'No atrocity film,'" read a memo Bernstein received on August 4, 1945, from the British Foreign Office. *German Concentration Camps Factual Survey* was shelved in September 1945, though its footage was key evidence in the trials of Nazi war criminals.

Four years ago, the IWM began restoring and completing Bernstein and Hitchcock's film, as they had originally envisioned it, including the sixth reel, which was unfinished when the project was shut down. *Night Will Fall* ends with a scene from the now-completed documentary. A large group of civilians (it's unclear who) walk through one of the camps, passing by decaying bodies on both sides of the road. As the camera zooms in on the grotesque faces of the dead, the narrator speaks: "Unless the world learns the lesson these pictures teach, night will fall. But by God's grace, we who live will learn."

With grace and masterful storytelling, *Night Will Fall* reveals the carnage the Allied troops found in the concentration camps and reminds us of just how powerful bearing witness can be. The film is a poignant, potent addition to the canon of Holocaust history. As Bernstein said in an interview in 1984, "My instructions were to film everything which would prove one day that this had actually happened. It'd be a lesson to all mankind as well. As to the

Germans, for whom the film that we were putting together was designed...it would be the evidence we could show them.... I wanted to prove that they had seen it, so there was evidence, because I guessed rightly, and most people would deny that it happened.”

01

LAST STOP

Donetsk, Ukraine - Victims of a rebel mortar lie in and around a city bus that was struck on January 22. At least 13 people were killed, part of the rising civilian death toll in the ongoing conflict between Ukrainian troops and Russian-backed separatists. The United Nations says the war has killed more than 5,000 people since April. Less than 24 hours before the attack, foreign ministers from Russia and Ukraine met in Berlin to sign a new cease-fire treaty that promised troop withdrawals on both sides.



Igor Ivanov/AP

02

THE NEXT WAVE

Immediately after being sworn in, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras announced plans to renegotiate terms for Greece's debt burden with EU leaders, raising fears of a standoff that could even lead to Greece leaving the European Union.



Michael Kappeler/picture-alliance/dpa/AP

03

WOMEN'S LIBBY

York, England - The Reverend Libby Lane smiles as she walks with the archbishop of York, John Sentamu, outside York Minster after being consecrated as the eighth bishop of Stockport and its first female bishop on January 26. After decades of debate, the Church of England voted last November to allow women bishops, saying it was time for the church to join the 21st century. The two-hour ceremony was stopped for a moment when the Reverend Paul Williamson stepped forward and shouted, "Not in the Bible," but otherwise went smoothly.



Jeff J Mitchell/Getty

04

UNDER THE BANNER

Kobane, Syria - Members of Syrian Kurdish People's Defence Units raise a flag on January 26 near where militants from the so-called Islamic State, also known as ISIS, had planted their own nearly four months ago in the strategic border town. The militia of Kurdish fighters, one of the few forces successfully fighting ISIS, celebrated retaking the town—a move that disrupts ISIS's access to the Aleppo road and others on the old silk route along the Syrian-Turkish border. Despite the victory, surrounding villages remain in the hands of ISIS. Members of a 21-nation U.S.-led coalition met in London days before to discuss their ongoing battle against the terrorist army; notably absent were the Kurds. In a statement to the press, Iraqi Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani wrote, “It is unfortunate that the people of Kurdistan do the sacrifice and the credit goes to others.”

